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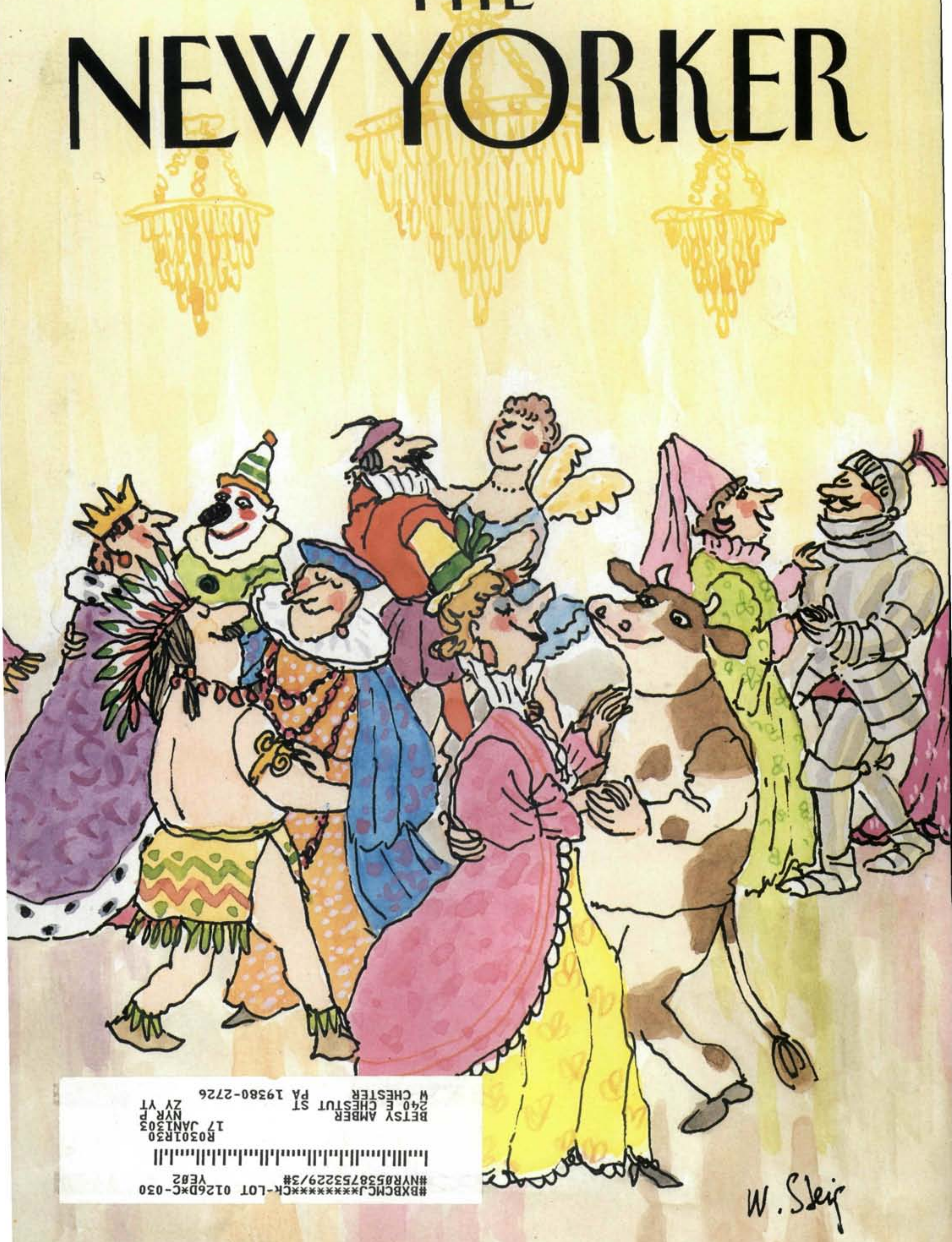

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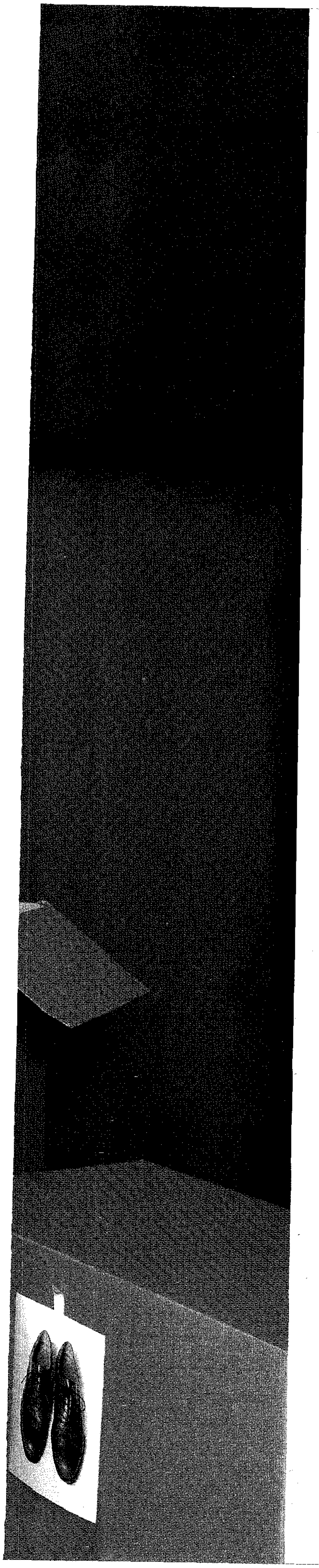

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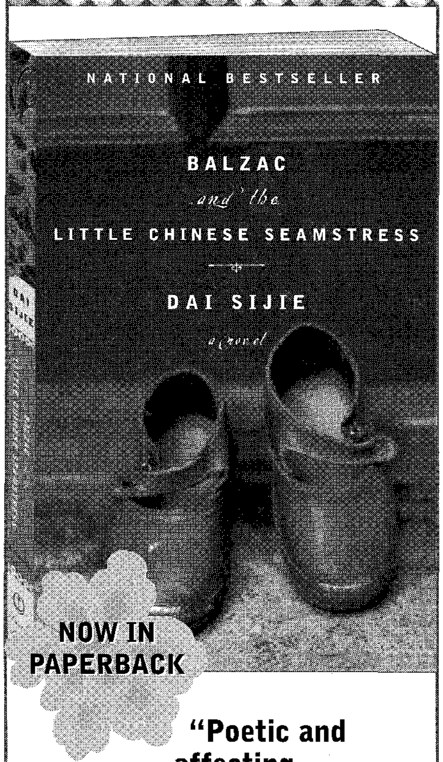

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THE NEW YORKER

NOVEMBER 25, 2002

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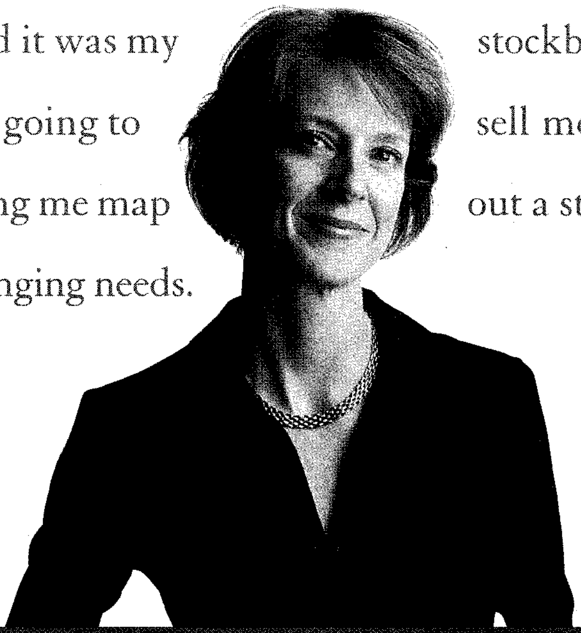

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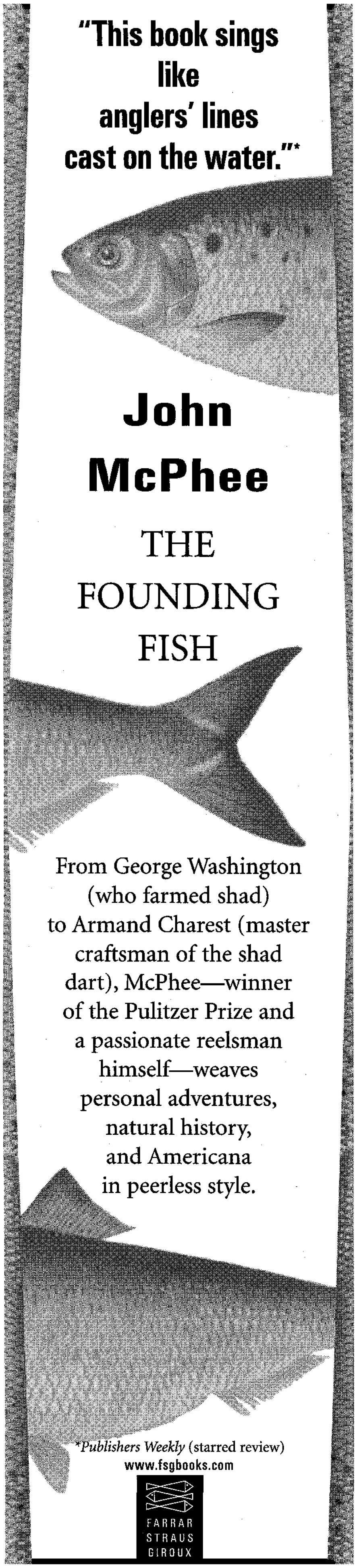
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John McPhee

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*Publishers Weekly (starred review)

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FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

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Jon Lee Anderson ("No Place to Hide," p. 76) is the author, most recently, of "The Lion's Grave: Dispatches from Afghanistan," a collection of reports for *The New Yorker.*

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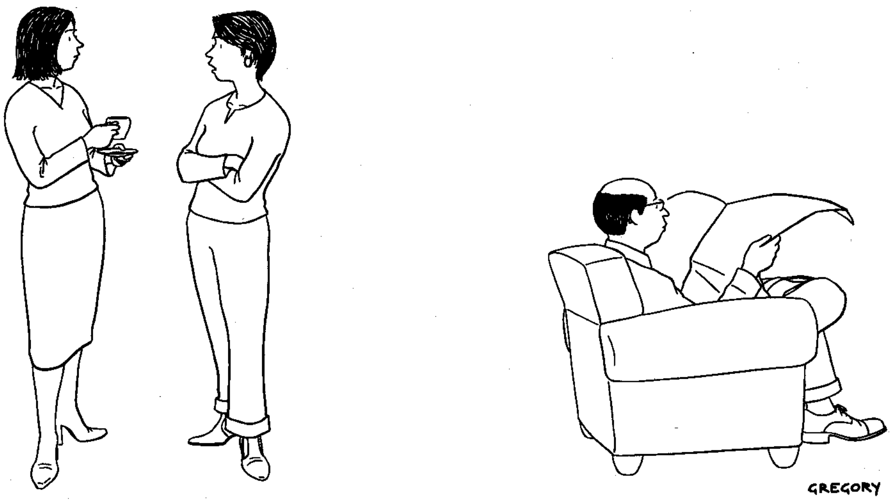
Elizabeth Spires (Poem, p. 78) is the author of five collections of poems, including "Now the Green Blade Rises," which came out in September. ♦



"I cannot believe the things I've heard coming out of his mouth since he started listening to Eminem."

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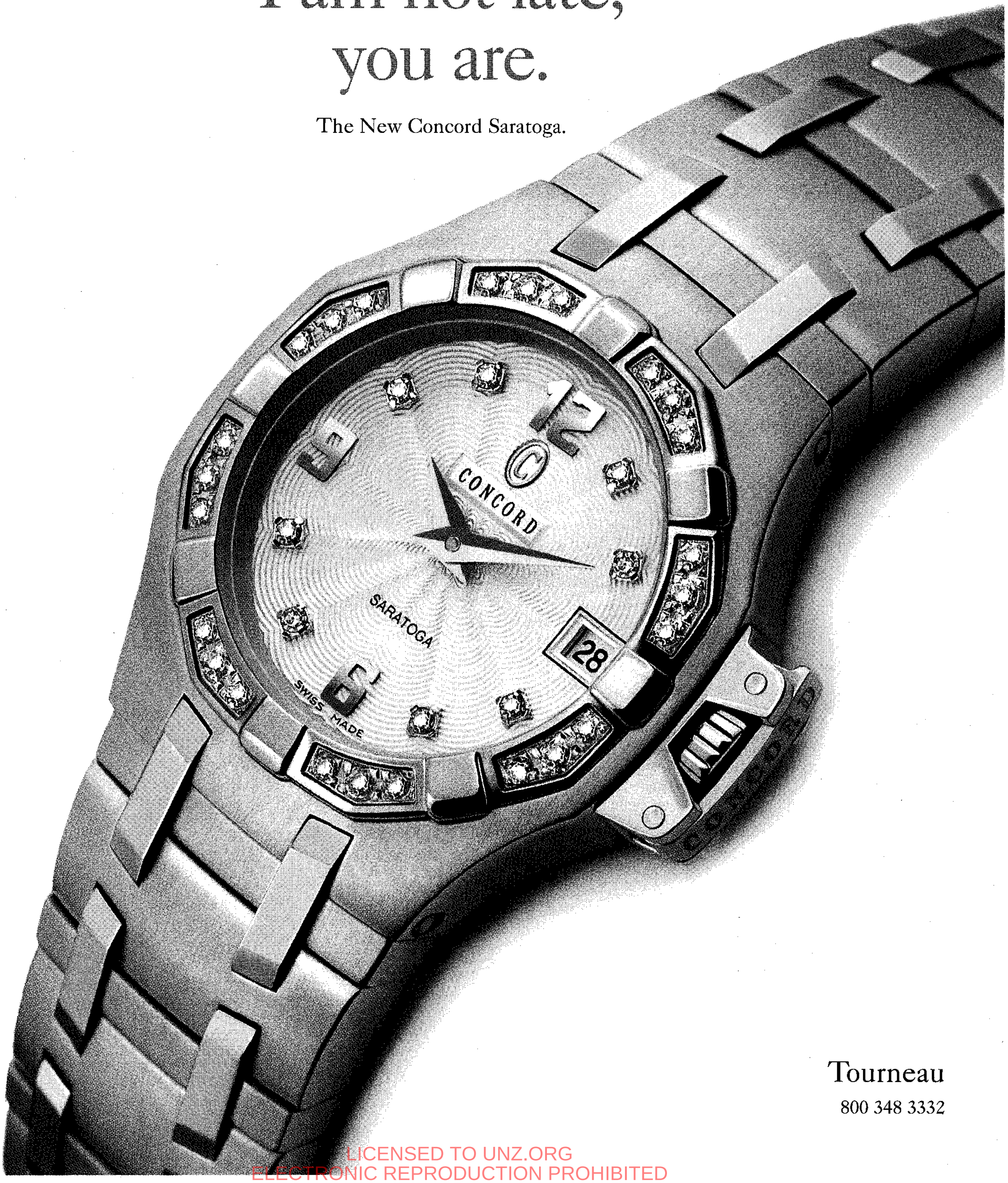
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DOCTORS AND DYING

It is surprising, in Jerome Groopman's article on how doctors talk to patients facing death, to find no mention of the right-to-die movement ("Dying Words," October 28th). In the five years since the enactment of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, I have been involved as a doctor in caring for forty terminally ill patients who requested physician-assisted suicide. Some were among the fewer than one hundred patients across the state who, having met the law's requirements, took prescribed medicines to end their lives and died peacefully, almost all of them at home in their own beds. A much larger number, reassured by the knowledge that they had a choice, have died well, without taking the medication. The Oregon act gives terminal patients an additional option, which allows them to negotiate more effectively with their doctors about their care and to refuse unwanted, intensive, and often futile care at the very end of their lives.

Peter A. Goodwin
Portland, Ore.

Groopman notes that some European doctors do not inform dying patients of their diagnoses. This is also the case in East and Central Africa, where many doctors and nurses are skittish about giving bad news. When the disease is cancer, the consequences are not particularly dire. But when it is an infectious disease like AIDS, the health providers' reluctance imperils others. Neglecting to train health professionals in how to counsel dying patients is not just a humanitarian issue; sadly, it may be worsening a devastating epidemic.

Paula Tavrow
Pasadena, Calif.

WHY WE WERE IN VIETNAM

Nicholas Lemann, in his review of Daniel Ellsberg's memoirs, writes that ideology more than information guided American policymakers on Vietnam (Books, November 4th). But information and ideology are not mutually exclusive variables. Our leaders were inundated with memos and reports on Vietnam. As the Pentagon Papers revealed, they too often attended only to the information that supported their positions, and disclosed only that which allowed them to pursue their positions. The Papers showed how the Eisenhower Administration advised Ngo Dinh Diem to stall elections when American intelligence estimated that eighty per cent of the Vietnamese supported Ho Chi Minh. They also showed that, even as Johnson ran for reëlection on a platform of restraint, his Administration made plans to escalate the war. In undermining democracy's basic tenets, those who prosecuted the war committed the political equivalent of burning a village to save it. Lacking real ideological parameters, they acted as if they knew better than the Vietnamese what was best for Vietnam, and better than Americans what was best for America.

Douglas Puchowski
Jersey City, N.J.

Lemann argues that Daniel Ellsberg was angry about the Vietnam War because "its goal, preventing Vietnam from becoming a Communist-governed country, was much less valuable to him than it was to Congress, the public, or the various Presidents." But a 1965 Defense Department document, one of the Pentagon Papers that Ellsberg made public, listed a different set of goals. "US aims: 70%—To avoid humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor). 20%—To keep SVN"—South Vietnam—"(and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands. 10% —To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life."

Marilyn B. Young
Professor, Department of History
New York University
New York City

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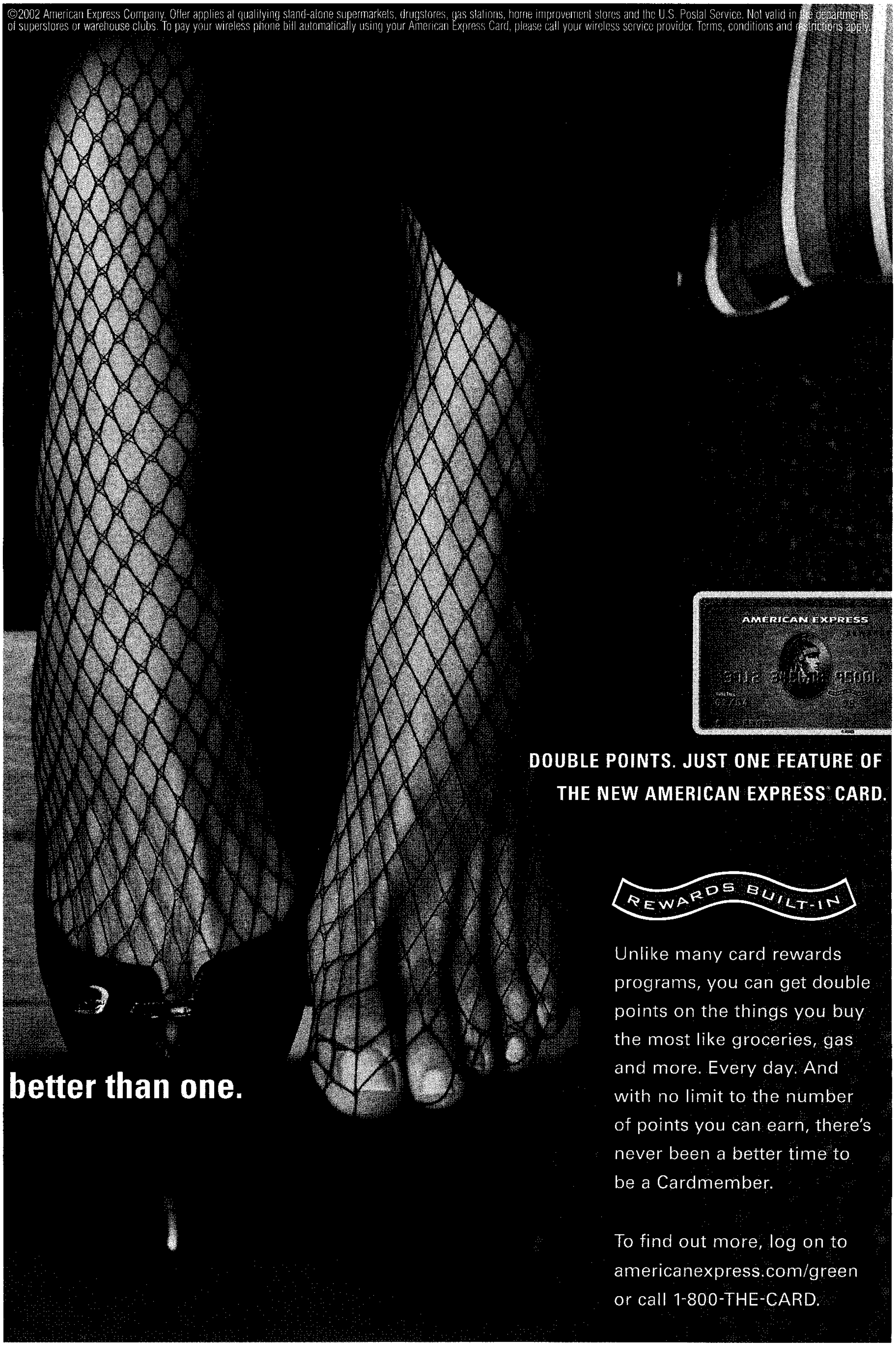

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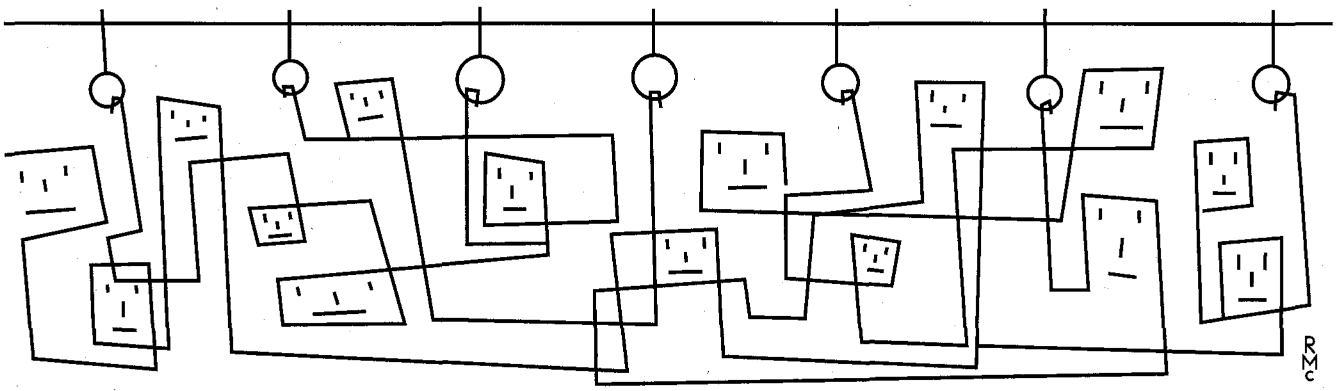

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
A new comedy by Elaine May, starring Danny Aiello and Jeannie Berlin, about porn actors who decide to make their own movie. In previews. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 239-6200.)

BLUE/ORANGE
The British playwright Joe Penhall brings his play about mental illness and racism to New York, in a production that stars Harold Perrineau, Jr., Zeljko Ivanek, and Glenn Fitzgerald. Two previews on Nov. 23, at 2 and 8. Opens Nov. 24 at 7:30. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

BOSTON MARRIAGE
David Mamet's play about the charged friendship between two women in nineteenth-century New England stars Kate Burton and Martha Plimpton. Karen Kohlhaas directs. Opens Nov. 20 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

CROWNS
Based on a book of portraits of black women in their church hats, Regina Taylor's new play includes gospel singing and features choreography by Ronald K. Brown. With Lillias White, Harriett D. Foy, Lawrence Clayton, and others. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES
A musical based on the 1967 Roman Polanski film, starring Michael Crawford, with music by Jim Steinman and a book by David Ives, Mr. Steinman, and Michael Kunze. John Rando is the director. In previews. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

DINNER AT EIGHT
Gerald Gutierrez directs a new production of George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's 1932 play about a high-society New York dinner party. Previews begin Nov. 21. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

ENCORES!
Melissa Errico, Kristin Chenoweth, Tyne Daly, and Patrick Wilson celebrate the tenth anniversary of the beloved musical-revival series with a concert of lightly staged songs from past productions. Nov. 24 at 2 and 7:30 and Nov. 25 at 7:30. (City Center, 155 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE FOURTH SISTER
In Janusz Glowacki's update of Chekhov's "Three Sisters," three Muscovite women yearn for the good life in America. Opens Nov. 21 at 8. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

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THE GENERAL FROM AMERICA
Theatre for a New Audience presents Richard Nelson's play about Benedict Arnold, with Corin Redgrave in the lead role. Opens Nov. 21 at 6:30. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

IMAGINARY FRIENDS
Nora Ephron takes on the famous literary feud between Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy in this new play, with music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Craig Carnelia. Swoosie Kurtz and Cherry Jones star as Hellman and McCarthy, and Harry Groener plays a number of male roles. Directed by Jack O'Brien. Previews begin Nov. 25. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

MAN OF LA MANCHA
Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Ernie Sabella star in a revival of the musical, directed by Jonathan Kent. Previews begin Nov. 23. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MERCY SEAT
MCC Theatre presents a new play by Neil LaBute about life after 9/11, starring Liev Schreiber and Sigourney Weaver. Previews begin Nov. 26. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN
Playwrights Horizons presents a new play by Christopher Shinn, starring Chris Noth, Matt McGrath, Suzanne Cryer, and Robert Hogan. In previews. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

A LAST DANCE FOR SYBIL
Ruby Dee leads the cast in a New Federal Theatre production of a play by Ossie Davis about power, economic freedom, and love. Edward Smith directs; Lloyd Richards is the supervising director. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

BACCHUS
A snappy new adaptation of Euripides' "The Bacchae" by Alex Roe, who also directs. With Matt Daniels in the title role. Closes Nov. 24. (Metropolitan Playhouse, 220A E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

BETTY RULES
A kinetic alterna-rock musical, directed by Michael Greif ("Rent"), chronicling the nearly two-decade-long career of a real-life girl band called Betty and its members' battle to keep the group and their sanity intact on the road, at home, onstage, and even in therapy. The actual band performs: Elizabeth Ziff (an angry-funny redhead who looks like Laraine Newman), her sister Amy (zaftig, with blond dreads), and Alyson Palmer, an African-American singer, bassist, and all-around bombshell. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BEWILDERNESS
Who could dislike a man who hates dolphins? In his ninety-minute routine, the genial, sleepy-eyed English comedian Bill Bailey gives this and forty-odd other reasons to relish his sardonic take on life. Like his fellow-comic (and countryman) Eddie Izzard, Bailey has a mild, chatty brand of humor that creeps up on the audience, convulsing them by afterthought. His riffs on male identity, the British national character, the Taliban, George Bush, and Tony Blair, spiked with digressions on foxhunting and candy-bar design—provide welcome succor in tense times. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

BOOK OF DAYS
Lanford Wilson's adroit and compelling yarn, well directed by Marshall W. Mason, conjures up a bright and barbarous Middle America—"Our Town" meets "The Fall of the House of Usher." The heroine, Ruth, played with terrific appeal by Miriam Shor, sniffs out evil—the murder of the owner of the cheese plant where she works—and pursues it recklessly while the rest of the corrupt community turns a blind eye. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/02.) (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

BURN THIS
In Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama, an angry straight man meets his gay brother's roommates after his brother's death, forcing the characters to confront the lies they have told in their lives. Elisabeth Shue and Peter Sarsgaard play the leads. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
This saucy, tongue-in-cheek musical, choreographed with extreme limberness by Jennifer Cody and directed by Erica Schmidt (who adapted it from the porn film), redefines "physical" comedy. When cheerleading captain Debbie (Sherie Rene Scott) is tapped to join the Texas Cowgirls, her squad takes on after-school jobs to help pay her airfare to Dallas. Their bosses offer to richly reward them for lubricious overtime duties, and the girls hesitate . . . for a moment. Played with po-mo brio by a gifted cast, including Scott, Mary Catherine Garrison as a jealous fellow-cheerleader, Jon Patrick Walker as Debbie's quarterback heartthrob, and Paul Fitzgerald as the mustachioed Señor Bradley. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

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DUDU FISHER: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Fisher, the Israeli cantor and Broadway star, has created a show that is as much schmoozefest as songfest, in which he talks about his family and his career and sings everything from the Kaddish to "Some Enchanted Evening." (Mazer Theatre, 197 E. Broadway, at Jefferson St. 239-6200.

FAR AWAY

In Caryl Churchill's inventive fable, now at the New York Theatre Workshop, a not-too-distant totalitarian society is engaged in a war of all against all. Humans, animals, nations, insects, the elements—even gravity—make and break alliances, with bloody consequences. In three acts, centered loosely on family, workplace, and fate, Churchill tightens the noose around her players. The show's vivid, nightmarish centerpiece, a fashion parade of the condemned, knocks the breath out of the audience. As an aunt who deceives her niece when she is little and betrays her when she is grown up, Frances McDormand conveys chilling consciencelessness. Marin Ireland delivers a remarkable performance as the adult niece, who doesn't understand that in a corrupt system the good will not be spared. Chris Messina also shines as her co-worker and husband. The show is not to be missed. Directed by Stephen Daldry. (79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG

In this update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, the playwright David Henry Hwang puts a new chassis on an old engine, producing a vehicle that runs far better than its prototype. The story works now, and the snazzy direction and choreography of Robert Longbottom help make up for the weakness of the music. There are at least four floor-show numbers, the most outrageous being "Fan Tan Fannie," in which the leggy Sandra Allen keeps time with a bevy of disembodied red and black fans. The production is part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity. (11/4/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE FOURTH WALL

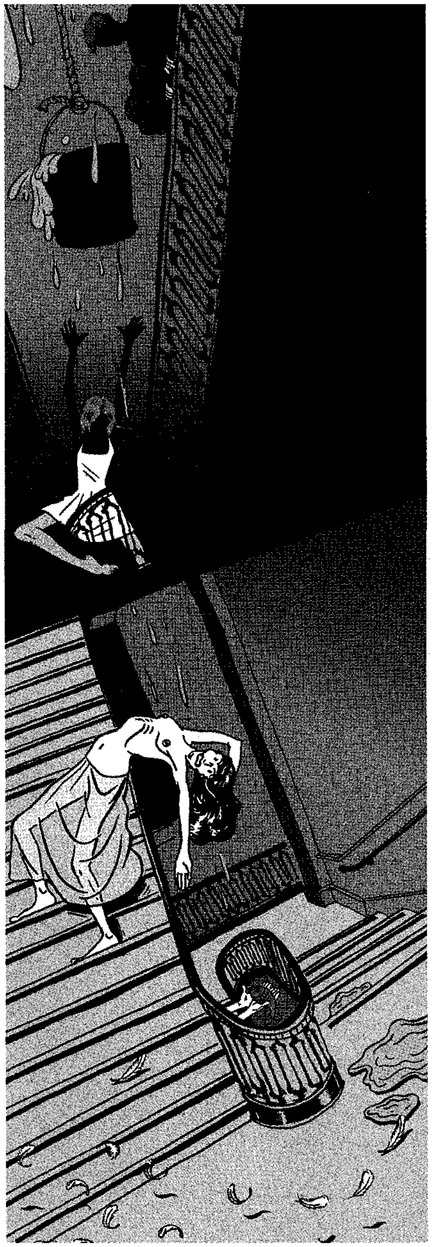
A. R. Gurney wants to have it both ways in this updated version of his 1992 play. As a citizen, he wants to loudly and passionately deplore the sorry quality of our nation's leaders—he names names—and bemoan the desperate condition of the planet. But as a playwright he's desperate to entertain, not alienate, his audience. Amazingly, with the help of four brilliant performers (Sandy Duncan, Charles Kimbrough, David Pittu, and Susan Sullivan), David Saint's stylish direction, and some damn clever writing, he succeeds at both endeavors. There's applause for the politics and big yuks for the gags. Constructed to illuminate the nature of the dramatic form while raising questions about the current state of the theatre in America—and adorned with five fabulous Cole Porter numbers—the evening is debonair, thought-provoking, and funny. (Primary Stages, 353 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE

Edie Falco and Stanley Tucci star in Terrence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life. Joe Mantello directs. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

GHOSTS

The reason to see the Classic Stage production of Ibsen's play is not the new Lanford Wilson translation of it, which often clunks ("Just shut up and listen for once!," "Aw, that was the booze talkin'"); it is Amy Irving's luminous rendition of Mrs. Alving, and the surprising evolution of her relationship with her sickly son, played with a fascinating brand of epicene virility by Ted Schneider. Schneider makes the show feel more contemporary than the modernized script does. In the original play, the boy suffers from syphilis, a congenital bequest from his degenerate father, but it is impossible, seeing this production, not to think of young victims of AIDS. The first act drags, hurt by Lisa Demont, who delivers a graceless Regina and addresses the seats instead of her cast members, and by Daniel Gerroll, who wavers as Reverend Manders. But the second act redeems the first. Directed by Daniel Fish. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 13.)



"Descent," by Noémie Lafrance, is set in the Clocktower building (see Dance).

ZOHAR LAZAR

HAIRSPRAY

This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HARLEM DUET

In the Canadian playwright Djanet Sears's reimagining, Othello married a black woman, Billie, before he ever met Desdemona. The play travels in time, landing in 1860, 1928, and the present. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 206-1515.)

HOLLYWOOD ARMS

This somewhat fictionalized memoir by Carol Burnett, written with her late daughter, Carrie Hamilton, takes its name from the residential hotel in Los Angeles where the comedienne was raised by her grandmother (Linda Lavin), while her mother (Michele Pawk) struggled to build a career as a journalist. Lavin's performance as Nanny embodies what Tennessee Williams called "the stiff-necked pride of the defeated." But the audience ends up feeling as Burnett did when she finally left home: eager to get away from the disappointing collection of lost souls she was expected to love. Directed by Harold Prince. (11/18/02) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

JOLSON & COMPANY

Stephen Mo Hanan and Jay Berkow pay tribute to the great vaudevillian Al Jolson. Through the device of a radio interview, Hanan retells Jolson's life with song, singing fourteen of his hits, including "My Mammy" and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie, Goodbye." (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

In this musical, based on the 1994 film about a repressed Irish bus conductor who joins an amateur dramatic society, the appealing Roger Rees, as Alfie Byrne, reads Oscar Wilde to his passengers by day and walks with him by night in his fantasy life. Created by Terrence McNally (book) and Stephen Flaherty (music), the show is tasteful, but lacks the vulgar but vital energy of the traditional show-biz musical. (10/28/02) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE MAYOR'S LIMO

Mark Nassar's gritty, funny, potty-mouthed drama about a homeless man who pees on the mayor's car has played at the Kraine Theatre since September, and deserves its long run. Set in the Ninth Precinct building (a block and a half away from the theatre), the play feels like a live episode of "NYPD Blue" or "Law & Order." Nassar plays the incontinent kook Benny (Banzai) Lambo with burly gusto; Sharon Angela (a "Sopranos" regular) gives a marvellous performance as a wisecracking hooker; and Patrick Michael Buckley and James J. Hendricks are effective as cops with hearts as big as their tempers. The play is pitched at a level of intensity that feels more like melodrama than cop drama; the first act is repetitive, the second is mawkish. Still, the four winning performances make a visit to the precinct worthwhile. Directed by Santo Fazio. (85 E. 4th St. 352-3101.)

MOSCOW

Three gay men who get trapped in a theatre with a copy of Chekhov's "Three Sisters" offer, in Nick Salamone and Maury R. McIntyre's musical adaptation, a fine new reading of the play. The actors are funny, sensual, and poignant—and great singers, too. Part of the Chekhov Now Festival, which ends Nov. 23. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 414-7773.)

MOVIN' OUT

Twyla Tharp's show about small-town teen-agers coming of age during the Vietnam War era is set to twenty-seven songs by Billy Joel. The story is told through song and dance alone, which creates some confusion, and some banality, in the unfolding events. But the band is terrific, and the dancers—above all, John Selya as the hero, Eddie—are positively on fire. (11/4/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

MUSICALS TONIGHT!

The staged-concert revival of Rodgers and Hart's 1928 Broadway flop "Chee-Chee," about a young couple who flee imperial Peking, yields many lovely songs, well sung by the company, and well worth rediscovery. One fine Rodgers melody follows another, delivering superbly crafted Hart rhyme—"appetite" with "grab it tight," for instance, or "mandarin" with "goose and gander in." But the Herbert Fields book, an unwieldy Oriental pastiche, would have been better left in the attic. (14th Street Y, 344 E. 14th St. 362-5620. Closes Nov. 24.)

ROOMTONE

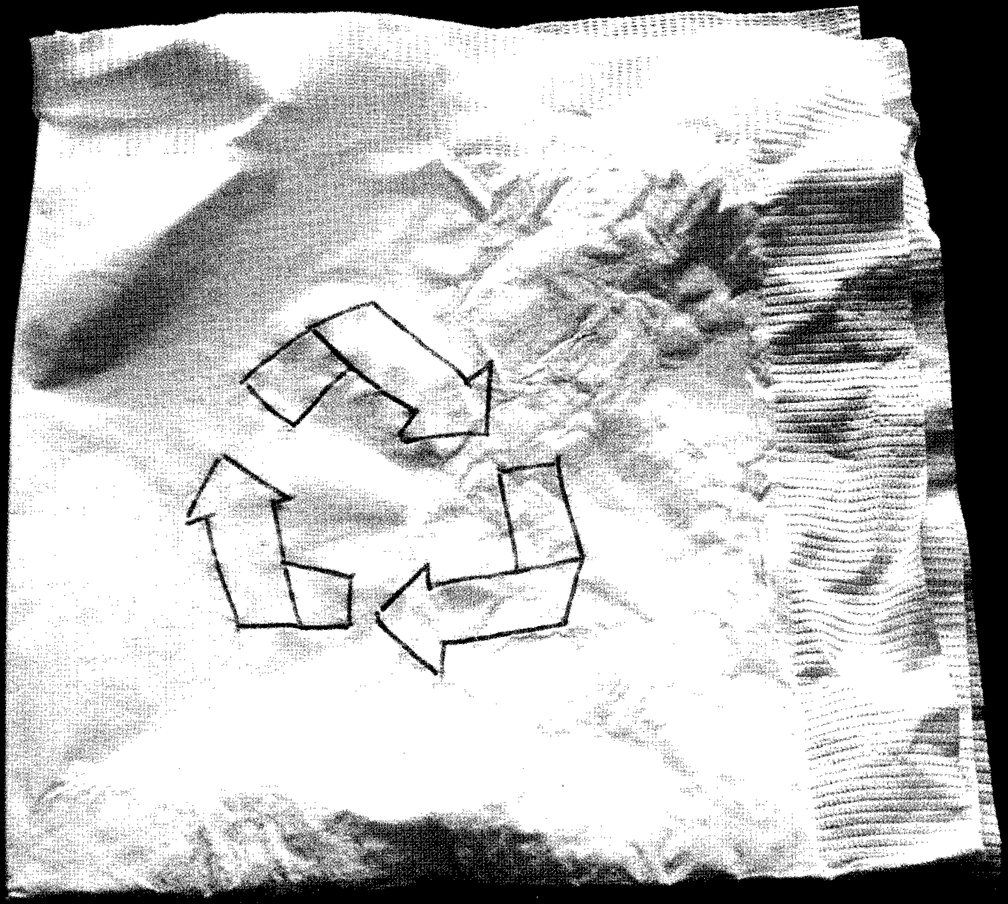
Elevator Repair Service bases its tenth-anniversary production on Henry James's "Turn of the Screw," interlaced with earnest texts by James's brother William. Closes Nov. 24. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

RUSSELL SIMMONS' DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY

Nine poets and a d.j. create a hip-hop poetry experience, inspired by Mr. Simmons's HBO series. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

SALOMÉ

Al Pacino is Herod, Dianne Wiest is Herod's wife, David Strathairn is John the Baptist, and Marisa

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY. JOHNNIE WALKER® BLACK LABEL®, BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY, IMPORTED
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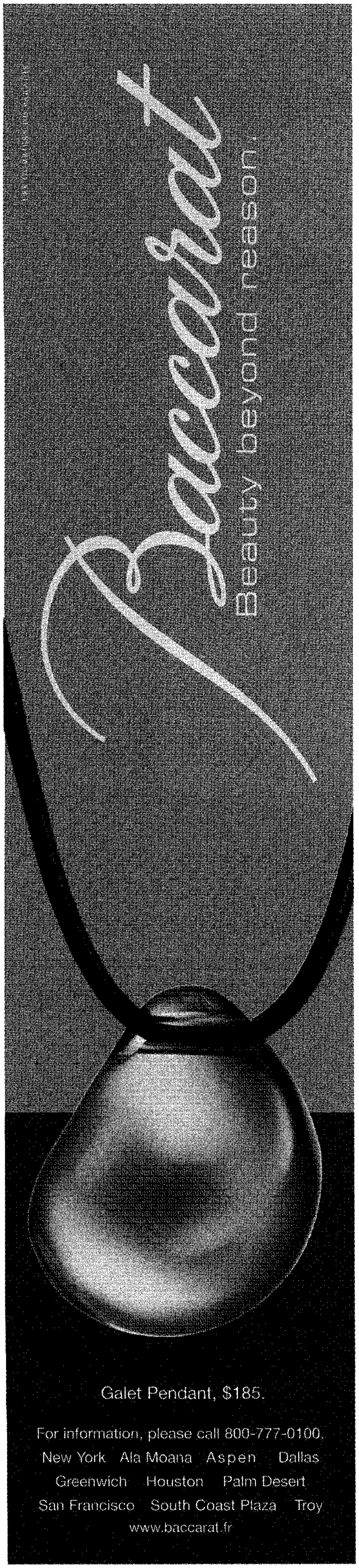

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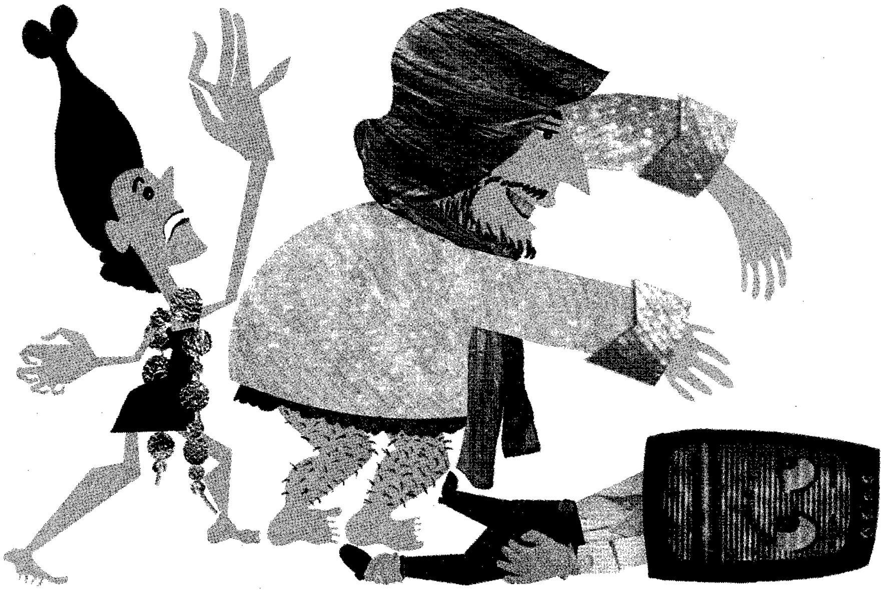
Tomei is the title character, in a staged reading of the Oscar Wilde play, directed by Estelle Parsons. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 866-468-7619.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Rupert Holmes's touching one-man tribute to the unsinkable George Burns and his more-than-a-sidekick wife, Gracie Allen, almost makes the audience feel more for the cigar-puffing comic in death than in life. As Burns, Frank Gorshin bonds with the audience through a steady string of jokes (some funny, others rueful) and the judicious use of a little soft-shoe. It is not just a showcase for one man; it's a showcase for an era. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SIGNALS OF DISTRESS
SoHo Rep presents a Flying Machine theatrical production based on Jim Crace's 1995 novel about an American ship whose passengers get stranded in a village on England's northern coast. (46 Walker St. 206-1515.)

TAKE ME OUT
Richard Greenberg's exhilarating production, directed by Joe Mantello, is about a headstrong baseball colossus named Darren Lemming (superbly played by Daniel Sunjata), who announces one day at a press conference that he's gay. The news creates an almost seismic disturbance for everyone but Lemming himself, whose attitude, sex aside, is "I'd rather just play ball." (7/22/02) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

TEDDY TONIGHT!
In Laurence Luckinbill's solo play about Theodore Roosevelt, the great man's humor and zest for life are always on display. It is Luckinbill's third solo outing (after stints as Clarence Darrow and Lyndon Johnson), and he has nearly perfected the form. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 206-1515. Closes Nov. 24.)



Cathy Weis's whimsical "Electric Haiku," at Dance Theatre Workshop through Dec. 1.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

TEMPORARY HELP
Based on a 1990 news story about a Missouri couple who were found guilty of killing their hired hands, David Wiltse's psychosexual thriller stars Margaret Colin, Robert Cuccioli, and Chad Allen, in a Revelation Theatre production. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

THE THREE BIRDS
The young British playwright Joanna Laurens based her play on a tragic Sophocles fragment about a man who marries one sister but desires—and rapes—the other. In the Nest company's ingenious staging of her story, conceived by the director Sam Gold and the set designer Andrew Lieberman, a broad rope net is suspended above the acting floor to hold the Greek chorus—sinuous creatures who clamber among the ropes above the players' heads or drop to the ground, panting menacingly. As Philomela, the raped sister, Adrienne Campbell-Holt projects the innocence of a creature helpless to protect itself or to express its pain. (Gale Gates et al., 37 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 212-352-7085. Closes Nov. 23.)

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE
A new play directed by David Esbjornson, based on the best-selling book. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

YELLOWMAN
Relentless and riveting, Dael Orlandersmith's two-person show puts a love story at the heart of a merciless study of self-hatred and suspicion among dark-skinned and light-skinned African-Americans. Orlandersmith and Howard W. Overshown (the "Yellowman" of the title) play a host of characters from two South Carolina families, who learn, to their misfortune, that hope is no match for rage. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

YENTL
The Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre presents the first Yiddish-language production of the play, translated by Jacob Weitzner and written by Leah Napolin and Isaac Bashevis Singer, based on the story by Singer. Robert Kalfin directs, and Eleanor Reissa plays Yentl. Simultaneous English translation is available. (45 E. 33rd St. 307-4100.)

DANCE

"HIBIKI (RESONANCE FROM FAR AWAY)"
Sankai Juku, a Butoh troupe originally from Tokyo but now settled in Paris, has been dancing the cycle of life and death (and other cosmic stuff) for twenty-seven years, long enough to have worked out a reliable formula. Set to space-age music, the shows feature half a dozen bald, bare-chested men, dusted in white powder like giant babies, who like to curl up in the fetal position in between bouts of moving slowly and gesticulating portentously. Every couple of years, Sankai Juku creates a new work and takes it on the road. This latest installment is organized around the theory of "primal resonance" (advanced by the group's artistic director), according to which blood in the womb and waves in the ocean resonate with one another. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 19 and Nov. 21-23 at 7:30 and Nov. 24 at 3.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
Fagan sets many of his spacious, funky dances to jazz, but they don't follow the beat. Instead, they work like improvisations that "travel around the main rhythmic line and leave it severely alone,"

Fagan says, "and then come back in the most unexpected ways." In its annual visit to New York, the company performs repertory works set to all kinds of music, and a première, "Translation Transition," with a rambunctious score that improbably, and brilliantly, fuses ska and bop. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 19-23 at 8 and Nov. 24 at 2 and 7:30.)

CATHY WEIS
Weis is a cartoonist of a choreographer, and the prankish play between her dancers and their live-video twins prompts as much joy as a Road Runner cartoon—and disregards as many laws of physics. In her latest piece, "Electric Haiku," she adds sound effects. When a dirty old man opens his trenchcoat, invisible birds rush out with a flutter of wings. An absurdly long drum roll accompanies another man as he tries to balance on one foot, while a wide video screen shows the grimy underside of the other foot. But this production isn't just zany. It's also as bighearted and unsentimental as, say, Lynda Barry's "Ernie Pook's Comeek," in its attention to the small, scrappy details in life (dirty feet, a flap of wings) and how they become big. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 21-23 at 7 and Nov. 24 at 2. Through Dec. 1.)

"THE WAY OF RONIN"
In a dance in six acts, the New York-based Japanese troupe Spinnin' Ronin tells its country's history from the primal past to the present, adding Japanese gesture to a base vocabulary of modern dance and ballet. Each act evokes conflict: in prehistoric Japan, dancers claw the air as wolves; in a Heian-era harem, women scratch at each other. Culture clash with the West is played as farce, with waltzes and break dances that degenerate into chaos. "We try to be Western, but we look stupid," Yukiko Miyawaki, Spinnin' Ronin's assistant director, explains. The narration of the piece is stilted, and the portrayal of Second World War-era Japan is somewhat saccharine. Still, the group shows astonishing versatility in its blending of Eastern and Western forms. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Nov. 22-24 at 8.)

"DESCENT"
In the dizzying and spectral "Descent," choreographed by Noémie Lafrance along a spiral staircase in the Clocktower building in Tribeca, the audience enters at the twelfth floor, then gradually descends the stairs as dancers appear on landings above and below. (108 Leonard St. 718-302-5024. Nov. 20-23 at 7, 8, and 9.)

"DANCES AND SONGS OF GEORGIA"
The Dancing Crane Georgian Dance Theatre brings the folkloric dances of the Caucasus to Queens Theatre in the Park. (Flushing Meadows, Corona Park. 718-760-0064. Nov. 24 at 7.)

LE BALLET NATIONAL DU SÉNÉGAL
The Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts continues its World of Dance series with "Kuuyamba," a dance piece that explores Mandingue rites of passage. (Whitman Theatre, 2900 Campus Rd., at Hillel Pl. 718-951-4500. Nov. 23 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

THE OTHER ONES
The surviving members of the Grateful Dead reconstitute the band for more long jams and further explorations of space. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Nov. 20 at 7:30. ♦ Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Nov. 26 at 7:30.)

SHAKIRA
This ambitious Lebanese-Colombian siren is slowly conquering the world with her aggressive rock and Latin dance pop. The sinewy firebrand has enough preternatural undulation to make Jennifer Lopez look like Gerald Ford. Look upon her, Britney, and weep. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Nov. 20 at 8.)

LAURIE ANDERSON
Best known for her whispery, early-eighties hit "O Superman," the spiky-haired performance-art pioneer returns. Though the avant-garde New York music-and-art scene she once typified seems like a

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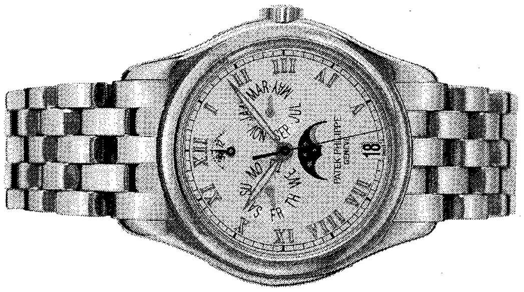

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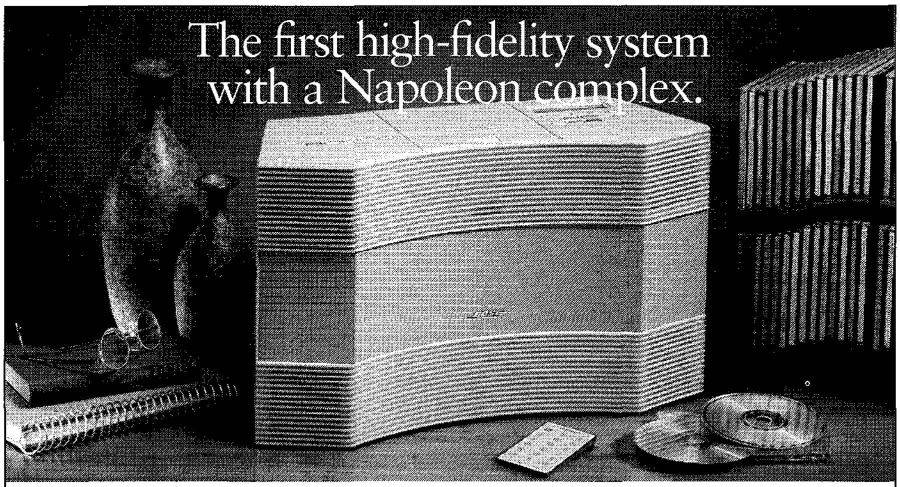

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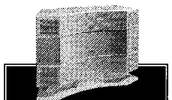

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relic now, Anderson continues to imbue her work with a singular perspective that is both haunting and timeless. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Nov. 20-24 at 8.)

STEVE EARLE
The country-rock rebel continues to stir things up. His latest album, "Jerusalem," brought him heat, thanks to "John Walker's Blues," his song about John Walker Lindh's life as the "American Taliban," written in the first person, as if to give a voice to Lindh himself. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 307-7171. Nov. 21 at 8.)

PETER GABRIEL
Sporting a newly shorn scalp, a goatee, and a slight paunch, the prog-rock pioneer turned hitmaker reappears after a Rip van Winkle-esque absence. The occasion for this tour is the release of "Up," his first proper studio album in a decade. Not one to be swayed by the fickle tides of pop culture, Gabriel continues to turn out work that is as rewarding as it is challenging. (Madison Square Garden. Nov. 21 at 8.)

Café Tacuba brings its genre-hopping sound to the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

JAZZ AT THE PENTHOUSE
Terri Lyne Carrington, a skilled drummer who's logged time with luminaries such as Wayne Shorter, leads an all-star ensemble with the pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** the saxophonist **Gary Thomas,** and the bassist **John Patitucci.** (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Nov. 21-23 at 8.)

CAETANO VELOSO
A knockout songwriter and a perfect charmer who wraps an audience in velvet lyricism and doesn't let it go until mellow Brazilian vibes have permeated the room. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 22 at 8.)

"FAST 'N BULBOUS"
The guitarist and onetime Captain Beefheart coconspirator Gary Lucas (a veteran of the early eighties' "Ice Cream for Crow" years) and Phillip Johnston, the avant-garde jazzman and arranger, reinterpret the compositions of Don Van Vliet with their Captain Beefheart Project. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 22 at 8:30.)

BLONDIE
Though often written off as glamorous New Wavers, Manhattan's own Blondie dabbled in genres ranging from bubblegum punk and disco to proto-hip-hop and even calypso, all the while redefining rock's gender roles thanks to the group's iconic front woman, Debbie Harry. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 23 at 8.)

LIL ANNE & HOT CAYENNE
Anne Stork, the leader of this upstate New York zydeco band, may be from New England rather than New Orleans, but you wouldn't know it from her spirited accordion playing. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 685-7597. Nov. 24 at 7:30.)

SOFT CELL
The campy and sleazy synth-pop duo returns, to the delight of rubber-clad fetishists and New Romantics everywhere. Though they're often tagged as a one-hit wonder (because of their signature early-eighties single "Tainted Love"), Soft Cell is not on a nostalgia trip. Their new album, "Cruelty Without Beauty," shows that the band is revitalized and that Marc Almond's rich, theatrical voice is in fine fighting form. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Nov. 24 at 9.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Nov. 21: The singer-songwriter **Keller Williams** stands out in a field of NPR darlings thanks to his expansive guitar work. Onstage, he performs with eight at a time, looping them all through a computer. Nov. 22-23: The **Radiators,** that hardworking New Orleans band with a rowdy national following. Nov. 24: The Grammy-winning rock *en español* act **Café Tacuba** takes its name from a small restaurant in its home town, Mexico City, but don't expect an evening of mariachi. Tacuba is certainly Latin, but the band is also fluent in funk, ska, and even old-fashioned punk.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 20: **Donna the Buffalo,** a winning ensemble from Ithaca, New York, seasons its country sound with a pinch of accordion and a touch of reggae. Nov. 23: The front-porch ballads and lilting, whimsical waltzes of **Clem Snide.**

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Nov. 23: **Life in a Blender,** longtime local favorites on the quirk-rock circuit, have a bizarrely theatrical show (often involving tirades from a sheep-headed hand puppet named Rugged Rick) and a lighthearted surreal sensibility that's capable of amusing even the surliest indie rocker. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 21: **Vincente Amigo.** A traditional flamenco guitarist and composer from Seville, Amigo is considered by many to be the heir to the veteran flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia. Nov. 22-23: **Soulive** performs in dark suits that are as sharp as the group's Hammond-organ-driven retro jazz and funk. Nov. 25: **Saint Etienne.** The exquisitely fluid dance band from Croydon, England, has thrived for more than a decade, thanks to the helium voice of Sarah Cracknell and the arch sixties connoisseurship of its co-founders, Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Nov. 22-23: **Stan Ridgway** is perhaps best known for the early MTV staple "Mexican Radio," which he scored with his former band, Wall of Voodoo, two decades ago. After splitting from the Wall in 1983, Ridgway embarked on a solo career marked by rambling narratives and eerie cinematic music. His stark, talky delivery and acerbic wit evoke Johnny Cash trapped in the twilight zone. Nov. 24: The **Asylum Street Spankers,** a collective of acoustic-blues-loving musicians out of Austin, Texas.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 22: With ambient, bass-heavy compositions that top fifteen minutes, the Brooklyn noise-rockers **Black Dice** may have turned ethereal on their latest album, "Beaches and Canyons." Their live shows, however, remain an excellent opportunity to lose your hearing. Nov. 23-24: Bill Callahan, who performs as **(Smog),** is a master of being alone in a crowd. Despite the folk-rock arrangements that flesh out his songs, his sombre baritone voice stands on its own, and his eerie, insular lyrics often turn mordantly funny, as on "Dress Sexy at My Funeral."

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—Nov. 23: **Smokey & Miho** is made up of Smokey Hormel, a guitarist who has backed Beck and Tom Waits, and Miho Hatori, half of the kitschy Japanese duo Cibo Matto. Together, they head south, into the music of Brazil. With the Western-influenced Spanish-English musings of **Cordero.**

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Nov. 21: One of the original voices of righteous indignation, **Gil Scott-Heron** is back after an unfortunate spell of legal trouble to preach revolution to the faithful. Dining.

UNCLE MING'S
225 Avenue B, between 13th and 14th Sts. (979-8506)—Nov. 20: The underground hip-hop magazine *Mugshot* celebrates the publication of its latest issue with the help of **DJ Evil Dee** (of the respected production team Da Beatminerz and the independent rap outfit Black Moon), the **Black Redemption Sound System,** and **DJ Eleven.**

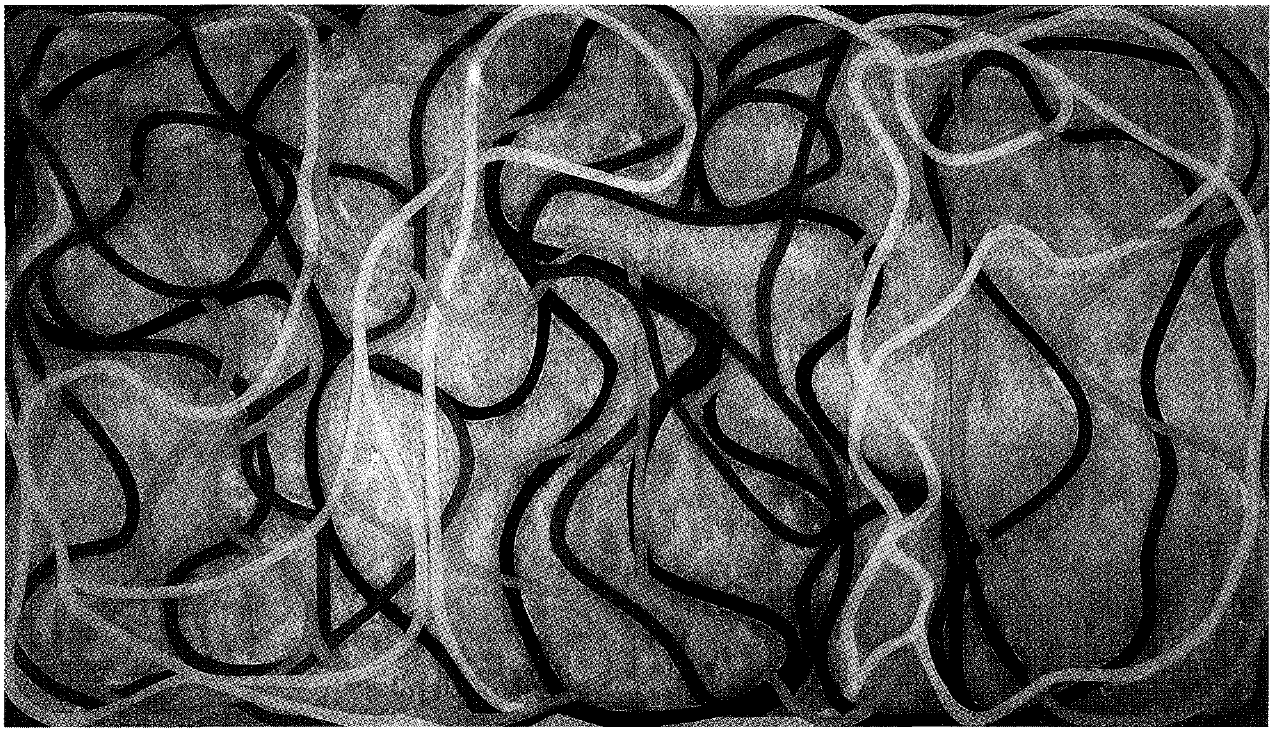
WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Nov. 25: **Frank Black and the Catholics.** Despite being the creative juggernaut behind the beloved Pixies, Frank Black (a.k.a. Black Francis, a.k.a. Charles Thompson) has kept a low profile since he went solo, nearly a decade ago. Further ignoring pleas for a Pixies reunion, Black is back with his Catholics, playing his own endearingly square-pegged rock.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Starting Nov. 19: The cabaret icon **Andrea Marcovicci** may not always have a dulcet tone, but her masterly interpretive skills and her charming way with an anecdote more than compensate for the rough spots in her delivery. She's performing the can't-lose love songs of Cole Porter for this engagement.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Nov. 19-24: The third annual **New York Django Reinhardt Festival.** The spirit of the great Gypsy jazz guitarist will fill midtown as a slew of European fretmen and violinists are joined by such first-rate American stylists as the winds players **James Carter, Ken Peplowski, Frank Wess,** and **Paquito D'Rivera;** the pianist **Bob Kindred;** and the guitarist **Bucky Pizzarelli** on various nights. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Nov. 24: On the heels of the mid-sixties bossa-nova explosion, the pianist **Sergio Mendes** and his Brasil ensembles scored a number of hits with covers of such songs as "Scarborough Fair" and "The Look of Love." There are more authentic options (see Caetano Veloso, above) than this light-handed take on Brazilian pop-jazz, but Mendes's slick vocal and instrumental blend carries its own charm.



Brice Marden, Chinese Dancing, 1994-1996, Oil on canvas. Collection UBS PaineWebber Inc. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.

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CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short** and his eight-piece orchestra. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the **Loston Harris** trio is in attendance.

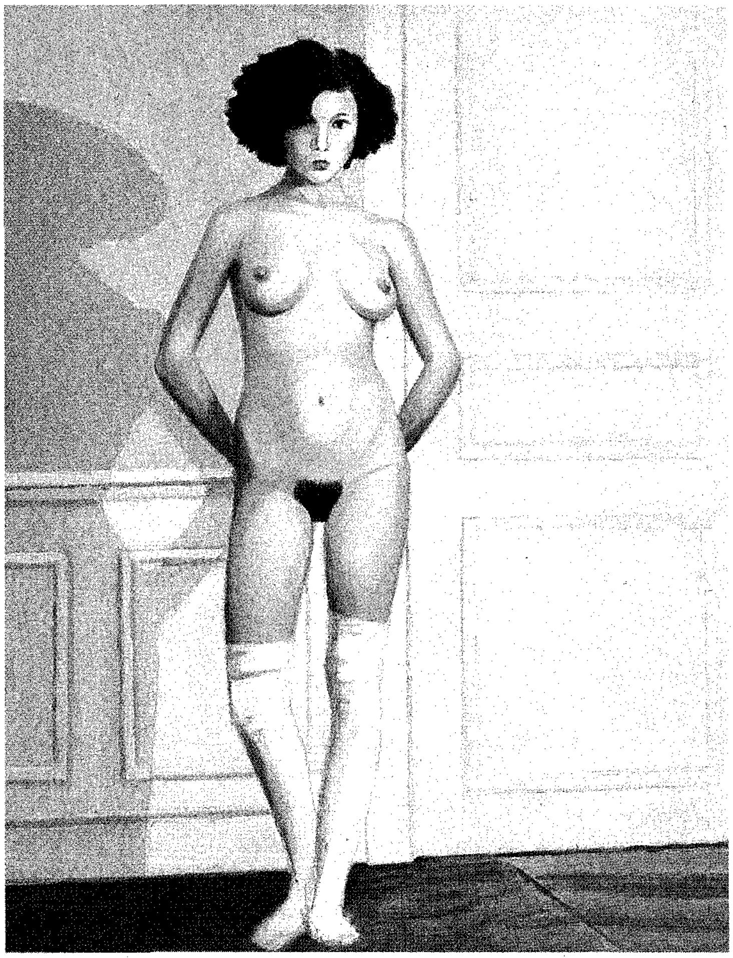
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 24: Graceful and gutsy in equal parts, the **Heath Brothers** quartet remains a paragon of sibling unity, one of current jazz's classic small groups. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (242-1063)—Nov. 21-24: By the end of this week, the future of jazz may seem a little brighter as a host of creative young pianists, drummers, and other instrumentalists who sidestep the mainstream, including **Jason Moran, Vijay Iyer,** and **Dafnis Prieto,** exhibit their burgeoning talents.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Nov. 24: The pianist **Fred Hersch's** lyrical swing always guarantees pleasure, but the front line that he's assembled for this engagement merits special attention. On trumpet is **Kenny Wheeler,** a Canadian veteran best known for his sterling work with Dave Holland and Anthony Braxton; the tenor saxophonist **Mark Turner** has his own growing following, who value his uncommon mix of cool sound and thick harmonic wanderings. Dining.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Nov. 25: **Craig Rubino, Tracey Moore, Amy Burton, Julian Fleisher,** and other vocalists offer an evening of songs by Jeffrey Stock, the composer of the musical "Triumph of Love."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The inimitable alto saxophonist **Lou Donaldson** settles in through Nov. 24, bringing his high-style blend of authentic bop and good-time R. & B. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



"Regarding Mona," by Duncan Hannah, at JG Contemporary.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Théodore Chassériau (1819-56) was an unqualified success in his own lifetime. He was apprenticed to Ingres at the age of twelve, won his first medal in a Paris Salon at eighteen, and then, at twenty-seven, jilted the neoclassic ideal for a lusty Romanticism à la Delacroix, whom he followed to North Africa. Then he died young—his first bad career move. Soon afterward, the Paris Commune of 1871 destroyed his most famous public murals, and he slipped into obscurity. Unfortunately, he seems to have deserved the posthumous downgrade—his sultry harem girls, dashing chevaliers, and pouty-lipped society sitters are agreeable to look at and unchallenging to contemplate. No wonder he received so many government commissions. Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"The Prints of Vija Celmins."** Through Dec. 29. ♦ **"Richard Avedon: Portraits."** Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9480)—**"Drawing Now: Eight Propositions,"** a trailblazing show curated by Laura Hoptman, sets the MOMA seal of approval on twenty-six youngish international artists working in the medium that's been the bedrock of visual art since Lascaux. Hoptman's "propositions" identify current modes of drawing, including illustration, decoration, fashion, architectural and scientific drafting, and comics. The show suggests a forge of styles, in which artists hammer out new links between craft, discipline, and worldly import. Some—John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, Neo Rauch, Ugo Rondinone—are farther along than others, but nearly all convey the exhilaration of being onto something. For the first time in quite a while at a museum group show, exacting comparison, argument, and judgment seem to be a matter of course. Don't miss this. Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Hollywood disaster flick meets Renaissance fresco (think "The Poseidon Adventure" with art direction by Fra Angelico) in **"Going Forth by Day,"** Bill Viola's visually striking five-channel video piece commissioned by a German bank for the Guggenheim Berlin. In one projection, an eclectic procession traipses through a light-dappled forest (the panoramic image evokes old-fashioned CinemaScope). In an adjacent scene, water gushes from the windows and doors of a pristine building façade. Death and resurrection figure elsewhere in the action, as Viola tackles Big Themes. The work was conceived before the events of September 11th, and the portent of disaster is uncanny if you can handle the smugly pious tone. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Richard Serra gets a goth remake in Tom Burr's purple plywood homage to the older artist's infamous "Tilted Arc," which is currently installed in the sculpture court at the Whitney Museum. (Serra's sculpture was removed from the plaza of a federal office building in lower Manhattan in the late eighties.) From the back, "Deep Purple" resembles a theatrical flat, and the knots in the plywood create a psychedelic moiré effect that is playfully antithetical to Serra's sombre Cor-Ten steel. At roughly two-thirds the scale of the original sculpture, the piece is the art-historical equivalent of the Stonehenge model in "This Is Spinal Tap." Unfortunately, it fails to transcend its own satire and remains little more than a punch line. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—Haluk Akakçe is a young Turkish-born, New York-based artist who intertwines technology and nature in poetic visions of a cyborganic Eden. At this outpost of the uptown museum, he shows a digitally animated video that infuses his own imagery with the nostalgic aura of black-and-white movies, using cinematic fadeouts to separate scenes. In one vignette, mechanical flowers—a hybrid of magnolias and light fixtures—float through the atmosphere, and the decorative imagery brings to mind spacecraft versions of Art Nouveau or Japanese screens. In another scene, vertical bars and biomorphic blips resemble vines and buds. Through Jan. 10. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular, interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of a really lived life. Through Jan. 5. ♦ Judy Chicago's monumental installation **"The Dinner Party"**—a delta-shaped banquet table for thirty-nine worthies from Primordial Goddess to Georgia O'Keeffe. Through Feb. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (628-6200)—**"Dagobert Peche and the Wiener Werkstätte."** When Peche died, in 1923, at the age of thirty-six, Josef Hoffmann, the founder of the Wiener Werkstätte, declared him "Austria's greatest genius in ornamentation since the days of the Baroque." As this sugarplum of a show reveals, Peche's designs

[illegible] the depths of [illegible]

Photo: Emily Watson and Mark Strong by Manuel Harlan

BAM
theater 2003

Twelfth Night

Donmar Warehouse

Sam Mendes

Uncle Vanya

"Sam Mendes leaves his famous theater on a triumphant note with a production that ranks with the very best in the past 40 years." —Sunday Times (UK) on *Twelfth Night*

"Emily Watson is the most affecting Viola I have seen. There is an innocence and vulnerability about her performance that catches the heart."

—The Daily Telegraph (UK) on *Twelfth Night*

"Simon Russell Beale...is just sensational. No Vanya has moved me more."

—The Evening Standard (UK)

"★★★★★...Exquisite!"

—The Guardian (UK) on *Twelfth Night*

"London's hottest ticket, and rightly... searingly directed by* American Beauty *Oscar-winner Sam Mendes"

—The Philadelphia Inquirer

"Highly charged, sexually driven, clearly focused...a glorious piece of theatrical daring." —The Observer (UK) on *Uncle Vanya*

Photo: Anthony O'Donnell and Simon Russell Beale by Manuel Harlen

Uncle Vanya
By Anton Chekhov
A version of the play by
Brian Friel

Donmar Warehouse

Directed by Sam Mendes

Set design by
Anthony Ward

Costume design by
Mark Thompson

Lighting design by
Hugh Vanstone

Music by George Stiles

Sound design by
Paul Arditti

Cast:
David Bradley
Selina Cadell
Luke Jardine
Paul Jesson
Helen McCrory
Cherry Morris
Anthony O'Donnell
Gary Powell
Simon Russell Beale
Gyuri Sárossy
Mark Strong
Emily Watson

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sought to "overcome utility." He ardently believed that form should disguise function, not follow it. His irresistible flair for decorative embellishment is evident in every object, from a small silver box in the shape of a pumpkin topped with a curlicue of tendrils to a red-and-yellow cabinet with pyramid finials that looks like a collaboration between Michael Graves and Marie Antoinette. Through Feb. 10. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—This survey of the work of Carroll Dunham is a joyride of a show spanning the twenty-year career of a painter whose inspirations run from Surrealism to Saturday-morning cartoons. The earliest works, explosive abstractions painted on board in a palette reminiscent of Kandinsky, introduce the biomorphic blobs and libidinal tubers that remain part of Dunham's vocabulary as his paintings shift toward representation (lately, his blobs have sprouted teeth and spurting phallic noses). As if retracing the development of civilization, Dunham's early primordial abstractions give way to internecine battles of angry shapes that have recently evolved into citified roughnecks dressed in suits and stovepipe hats. Throughout the evolution, Dunham's deep commitment to painting shines through with ferocity and a strange grace. Through Feb. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—The roguish display text by the *Times* restaurant critic William Grimes does much to dispel the solemn air of the Edna Barnes Salomon Room, where **"New York Eats Out,"** an overview of a century of dining out (from the Taylor Administration to Camelot), is on view. Photographs, prints, and menus—printed on everything from tasselled silk to cardboard—chronicle changing culinary fashions in haute cuisine, Automats, and street venders (who once routinely offered oysters, yams, and coconut milk). Photographs record the diners of yesteryear, including one showing a New Year's banquet at Rector's, the turn-of-the-century midtown lobster joint, interrupted by the appearance of a buxom young dish popping out of a wall clock. Through March 1. (Open Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

OSCAR BLUEMNER
Bluemner (1867-1938) began his career as an architect, but when his practice faltered he continued drawing buildings and landscapes for pure pleasure. The current show brings together forty-five of his pocket-size watercolors and pencil drawings, most of them preparatory sketches for larger works. In the teens and twenties, he got caught up in the Stieglitz circle, and he shares with his contemporaries Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, and John Marin a sensual yet detached appreciation for modest American scenery—tenements, barns, hills, trees. But what set him apart was his preference for hot contrasting colors and architectonic rigor, a style that Stieglitz called virile. Through Dec. 7. (James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767.)

PETER DOIG
Small works on paper by a British artist with a knack for cavalier lyricism beautifully suited to the drawing medium. The show is most interesting when a series of drawings offers variations on a single theme, like the child standing high in a tangle of branches who shifts from girl to ghost to shadow, more echo than image. The entrance to the gallery is lined with a group of vivid tropical scenes, including three views (close, closer, closest) of a polka-dotted boathouse. Through Jan. 18. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

TABLES FOR TWO

LOCANDA VINI & OLII
129 Gates Ave., at Cambridge Pl., Brooklyn (718-622-9202)—The décor at this cozy Clinton Hill trattoria, a mixture of dark woods and tall glass cabinets filled with apothecary bottles and Cinzano collectibles, is renovation chic: the owners have kept the Deco-style "Lewis Drug Store" sign out front and the prescription-center windows by the kitchen. The dishes, meant to remind you of Tuscan home cooking, come at a Continental pace, gracefully slow; you don't feel neglected, you feel as though you're on vacation. And the wines on the restaurant's small list, from the Super Tuscans and Sangioveses to the *vino da tavola* served *al consumo* (a wooden dipstick tells you how much you owe), are well chosen and affordable. All this is laudable. But what you'll be talking about is François.

François Louy, the co-owner and maître d', comes from Milan by way of Harry Cipriani, with a stage presence that's Mastroianni by way of Benigni. (His wife and co-owner, Catherine de Zagon Louy, from Florence via Balthazar, watches serenely from the bar.) François shaves, by the look of it, every other midnight; he accessorizes his Italian sports coats with mismatched Converse sneakers; and he addresses his customers with a brand of reprobate charm that sounds all the better with his Milanese accent. When one woman asked for a glass of *prosecco* before ordering, François quickly said, "For you, the world."

The Louys have also imported a confident Italian chef, Michele Baldacci, who works out improvisational menus full of fresh, unexpected pastas and organic-meat dishes. During recent visits, the cold antipasti came with a venison salami. The thin, delicious Piedmontese beef, cut in strips, arrived undressed, on a bed of fresh arugula. The tagliatelle with porcini, which appeared at the table by mistake, was an ideal and daringly simple combination of mushrooms and pasta. Through it all, François presided, guided, and cajoled. After one table couldn't decide between the cheese plate or dessert, he proclaimed, "Cheese plate," and left. Later, he justified his brusqueness to the happy cheese eaters: "One day," he said, "you'll trust me." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner and Sundays for lunch. Entrées $6.50-$19.50.)

—*Kevin Conley*

Short List

ANTHONY CARO
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through Dec. 20.

JOSEPH CORNELL
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.
Through Dec. 20.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DAVID ALTMEJD
The references in this promising, if scattershot, début run the gamut from minimalism to lycanthropy. Costume trinkets and crystal-encrusted werewolf heads are installed on a low-lying black platform, as well as on the smaller structures it supports, including a mirrored cube with a hidden, illuminated chamber. This secret cubbyhole, a lavender platform, and the dual identity of werewolves all hint at closeted concealment, underscored by the scrap of graffiti that reads "dissent queer, build clear." Through Nov. 30. (Ten in One, 526 W. 26th St. 604-9660.)

KARIN DAVIE
Karin Davie paints one thing: slaloming swaths of hot color squeezed into the sternly right-angled con-

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fines of the canvas. It's as if a tiny sliver of a fun house, where circus awnings and banners are reflected in torqued mirrors, were isolated and enlarged into abstraction. Davie's garish and exuberant work wants to charm the eye with its candy-colored excess, while teasing the mind with calligraphic gesture and the hum of acid hue on acid hue. In the moment of consumption, the stratagem succeeds. But there's an unpleasant aftertaste: the paintings feel spun out by the yard, the colors feel matched to a client's penthouse décor. Through Dec. 21. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.)

MIKE KELLEY
Kelley's artistic persona is predicated on permanent adolescence, and his sprawling exhibition "Reversals, Recyclings, Completions, and Late Additions" builds on sketchy memories of every school at which he ever put in time. Archetypal hidey-holes like the janitor's closet receive particular attention, as does an incomplete collection of *Sex to Sexty* magazine, a *Mad*-like snigger-fest with bodacious babes on every cover. There are also paintings on velvet, coin-and-button collections, architectural models and floor plans, and some anomalously sleek brushed-steel mobiles. Does it all add up? No. But, then, a restless overabundance of deliberate underachievement has always been Kelley's beau ideal. Through Dec. 7. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

"REGARDING GLORIA"
For this smart group show, ten different artists respond to Gloria Steinem-era feminism and its shaky legacy with succeeding generations. A sculpture by Edythe Wright deconstructs a black WonderBra into parts as if it were the skeleton of the missing link (the display text notes that the object is "on loan from the Institute of Domestic Archeology, Hall of Intimate Garments"). Jackie Gendel presents nine paintings from her comic book "Brenda the Class Slut." Kathleen Kranack wryly documents various male compliments, comments, and insults, such as "Show us your tits" and "My girlfriend wouldn't care. She'd want me to get it out of my system." Most works share in this satiric and skeptical relationship to feminism. Through Dec. 1. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 924-4212.)

Short List

PETER CAIN / PAUL FEELEY
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through Nov. 23.

TERESITA FERNANDEZ
Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 255-2923.
Through Nov. 30.

DUNCAN HANNAH
JG Contemporary, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662.
Through Dec. 21.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

CHRIS JOHANSON
Johanson hails from San Francisco, where he's one of a loosely organized band of artists who are making the switch from street-level art—graffiti, impromptu public performance, sculptures made with whatever's around—to galleries. His particular m.o. is brightly colored, naïvely figurative paintings with cartoon-style thought bubbles filled with witty non sequiturs. "Say no to vicious cycles," one stiffly goofy gentleman advises another. "Give chance a chance," his interlocutor replies. Johanson also shows two sculptures, mostly made of wood, both large enough to crawl inside. His ideas, however, are better served by the cheerful awkwardness and speedy humor of the paintings. Through Dec. 21. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

CÉSAR PATERNOSTO AND CECILIA VICUÑA
Paternosto's drawings are spare and sprightly, mostly small squares of white paper subdivided by building-block lines of prismatic color. A pioneer of avant-garde abstraction in Latin America in the seventies, the Argentinean artist adds elements of pre-Colombian design to the modernist grid. Similar interests drive the Chilean artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña, who collaborates on the installation—her

delicate ropes of unspun, brilliantly dyed wool hang in answer to Paternosto's crayon, gouache, and watercolor lines. Over the course of the exhibition, more woollen threads will be added as the drawings are slowly removed, establishing a breathlike rhythm of exchange between the two artists. Through Dec. 20. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

Short List

LIZA LOU
Deitch Projects Annex, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300. Through Nov. 30.
ROSIE LEE TOMPKINS
Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Dec. 14.

PHOTOGRAPHY

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY
It comes as no surprise that this exhibition of never-before-seen color images (all taken in the final decade of Moholy-Nagy's life) reveals some extraordinary truths about the nature of light. Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) was one of twentieth-century photography's most skilled technicians and most profound theorists. The bold, scientific spirit of discovery that governs a shot of traffic lights transforms what might have remained a purely abstract study of red, pink, and white into a lush visual axiom about oscillation and energy. The sensibility at work in a picture of burning paper and embers brings an exquisite delicacy to this classic meditation on creation and destruction. Who ever thought fire could be so tender? Through Nov. 23. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

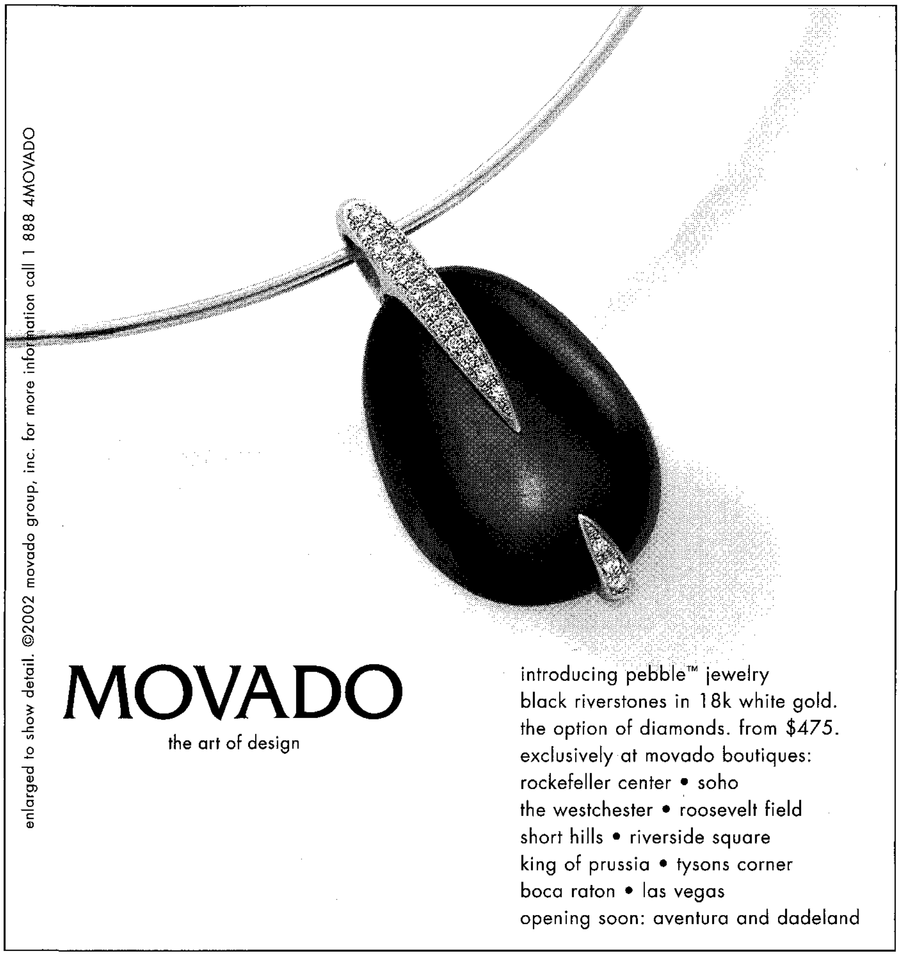
RYAN WEIDEMAN
Weideman makes his living driving a cab and, when his passengers agree to it, makes art by snapping their portraits in the back seat. The results are dense images that chronicle more than two decades of lower Manhattanites. "Self-Portrait with Woman and Cat" is a study in jolting contrast that pits big-city sophistication against urban loneliness. "Self-Portrait with Vampire and Nymphet" packs a potent dose of dark perversity, while "Six Girl Crack-Up," a rare early picture in which Weideman doesn't appear, is an innocent burst of bottle-blond joy. The tour de force, "Self-Portrait with Salsa Betty," frames a menacingly explicit peep show behind the taxi's plastic partition, while in the foreground Weideman's sad eyes bear witness to the viewer's voyeurism. Through Jan. 5. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

Short List

CHAN CHAO
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Nov. 30.
TOMER GANIHAR
Rodgers/9W, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810. Through Nov. 30.
LAUREN GREENFIELD / JUDITH JOY ROSS
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Nov. 30.
PHILIP PERKIS
Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 741-4764. Through Dec. 21.
SYLVIA PLACHY
Bateman, 560 Broadway. 925-7951. Through Nov. 30.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 20 at 10:15 A.M.: The final session of a two-day sale of Latin-American art. ♦ Nov. 21 at 10:15 A.M.: The first of two sessions focussing on nineteenth-century furniture, paintings, and decorative art works. ♦ Nov. 21 at 2: The closing session, including a large and delicately colored Italian micromosaic of the Vatican, from 1910-12. ♦ Nov. 22-23 at 9:30 A.M. and 2: A sale of wine, featuring a "superlot" of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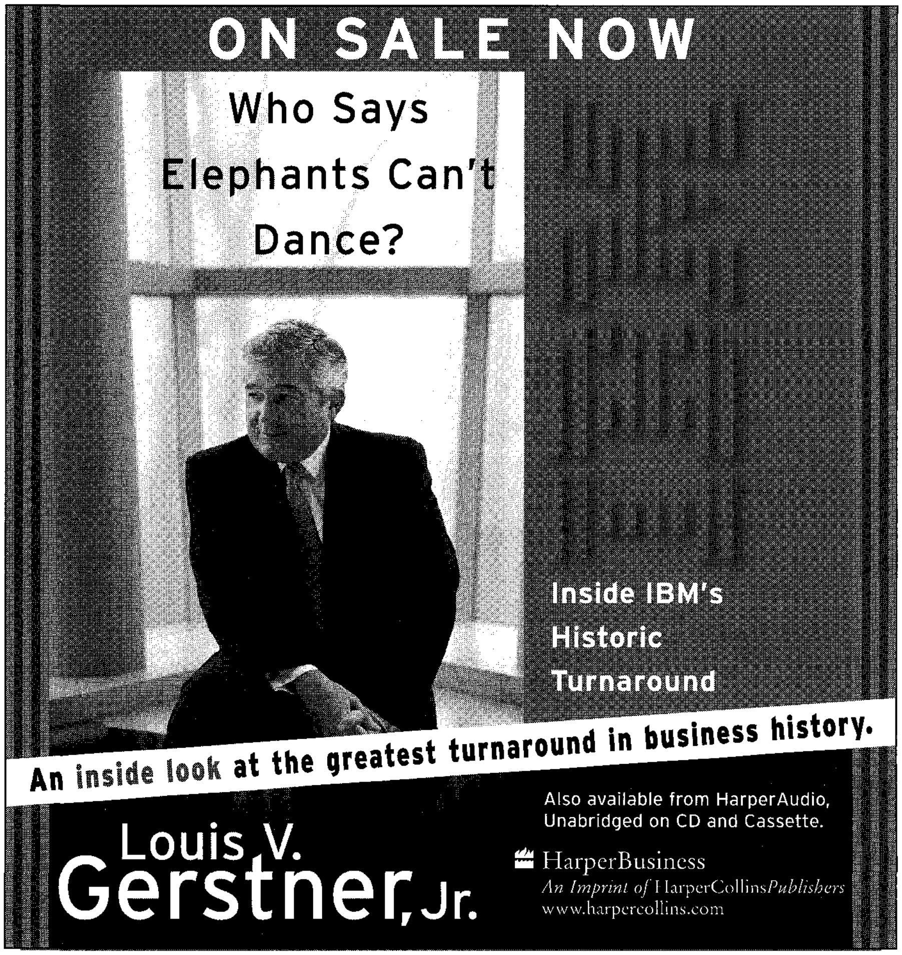
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seven Methuselahs from Romanée-Conti, a complete sampling of the 1993 vintage. A strong selection of Quinta do Noval "Nacional" ports is also featured. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Nov. 20 at 7 and Nov. 21 at 10 A.M.: Two sessions of Latin-American art from the eighteenth century to the present. Works by Rivera, Chapman, and Tamayo ("Bailarinas," from 1942, estimated to sell for up to a million dollars) are highlights of the sale. ♦ Nov. 26 at 10 A.M. and 2: Roger Prigent's selection of more than three hundred and fifty items from his gallery, Malmaison Antiques, featuring Russian, French, Italian, and American designs from the eighteenth century to the present. An illuminated, custom-etched acrylic bedstead made by Laszlo Medgyes for Helena Rubenstein and a Louis XV fruitwood-and-marquetry bureau from the collection of Cole Porter are among the highlights of the sale. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

SWANN
Nov. 21 at 10:30 A.M.: An auction of contemporary art. Works by Guston ("Two Forms II," expected to bring up to eighty thousand dollars), Richter, Frankenthaler, and Dine are among the highlights of the sale. ♦ Nov. 21 at 2:30: Contemporary prints from the collection of June Wayne, the founder of the renowned Tamarind lithography workshop. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

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METROPOLITAN OPERA
In order to get some further mileage out of Graham Vick's ill-fated 2000 production of **"Il Trovatore,"** the company has created a kind of Alan Smithee version, which no longer bears Vick's name and which removes some of his excess stage business (in the nunnery scene, Manrico no longer bursts into the church on a cross-shaped runway). It now projects an oratorio-like solidity—not a bad thing considering its very solid cast, which includes Sondra Radvanovsky, Larissa Diadkova, Franco Farina, Bruno Caproni, and Willard White; Frédéric Chaslin conducts. (Nov. 20 at 8 and Nov. 23 at 1:30.) ♦ Nicolas Joël's 1998 production of **"Lucia di Lammermoor"** returns to the house with its original Lucia, Ruth Ann Swenson. Swenson is one of the Met's most reliable properties; some will still be bored by her blandly genial characterizations (her mad scene is more admirable than affecting), but the coloratura is as dazzling as ever. The male leads bring more excitement to their tasks: the tenor Marcelo Álvarez, as Edgardo, is learning to combine Pavarotti's sense of sound with Domingo's sense of drama, and Anthony Michaels-Moore, as Enrico, has both an intense, trombonish baritone and a vivid way with words. Patrick Summers, the conductor, takes a rather blunt approach to the opera—Donizetti by way of Beethoven—but he is always a sensitive accompanist. (Nov. 21 at 7:30 and Nov. 25 at 8.) ♦ **"Aida,"** with Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Alexandru Agache, and Matti Salminen; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 22 at 8.) ♦ The Met's new production of **"Fidelio"** sets Beethoven's testament to freedom in a modern-day totalitarian state, with Waltraud Meier, Korliss Uecker, Johan Botha, Tom Fox, and Eric Halfvarson in the leading roles; Peter Schneider. (Nov. 23 at 8.) ♦ With Hei-Kyung Hong and Matti Salminen replacing Uecker and Halfvarson. (Nov. 26 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Rhoda Levine's production of **"Rigoletto"** may be anything but glamorous, but its bare-bones utility demands a cast that can get to the core of Verdi's drama—and this one mostly does. Louis Otey has suffered a little patchiness in his voice of late, but his stark realization of the title role lets us appreciate not only the jester's tenderness but also his brutality; Raúl Hernández (as the Duke) and Luz del Alba Rubio (as Gilda) use their younger and lighter voices with freshness and style. The conductor is Willie Anthony Waters, who gets more passion and commitment out of the City Opera orchestra than anyone in recent memory. (Nov. 20 at 7:30 and Nov. 22 at 8.) ♦ James Robinson's fanciful production of **"Hansel and Gretel,"** Humperdinck's gingerbread treat, with Jennifer Rivera and Kelly Kaduce in the title roles; Atsushi Yamada conducts. (Nov. 21 at 6:30.) ♦ With George Manahan replacing Yamada. (Nov. 23 at 1:30.) ♦ **"The Barber of Seville,"** with Georgia Jarman, Kathryn Cowdrick, Leigh Melrose, and Bruce Sledge; David Agler. (Nov. 23 at 8.) ♦ Renata Scotto's production of **"La Traviata,"** with Elena Kolganova, Benjamin Warschawski, and Michael Corvino; Ted Taylor. (Nov. 24 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. These are the final performances of the fall season.)

L'OPÉRA FRANÇAIS DE NEW YORK
Amy Burton, accompanied at the piano by the company's artistic director, Yves Abel, performs "Yvonne Printemps: A French Diva Unveiled," a revue celebrating the life and work of the actress and operetta star. Burton's selections span the breadth of Printemps's career, including *mélodies* and operetta numbers written for her by Poulenc, Auric, Messager, and Coward. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 307-4100. Nov. 20 and Nov. 22-23 at 8.)

HENRY STREET CHAMBER OPERA
Neal Goren conducts a Martinů double bill, **"Hlas lesa"** ("The Voice of the Forest"), a sweetly lyrical 1935 rendering of a Czech fairy tale, and **"Les Larmes du Couteau"** ("The Tears of the Knife"), a Dada opera from 1927. The singers include Jacqueline Venable, Kristine Winkler, Eric Fennell, Tiffany Regal, and Daniel Mobbs. (Harry de Jur Playhouse, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Nov. 21, Nov. 23, and Nov. 25 at 8. These are the final performances.)

"Uncle Jimmy's Dirty Basement," at the Bowery Poetry Club (see Above and Beyond).

MARCELLUS HALL

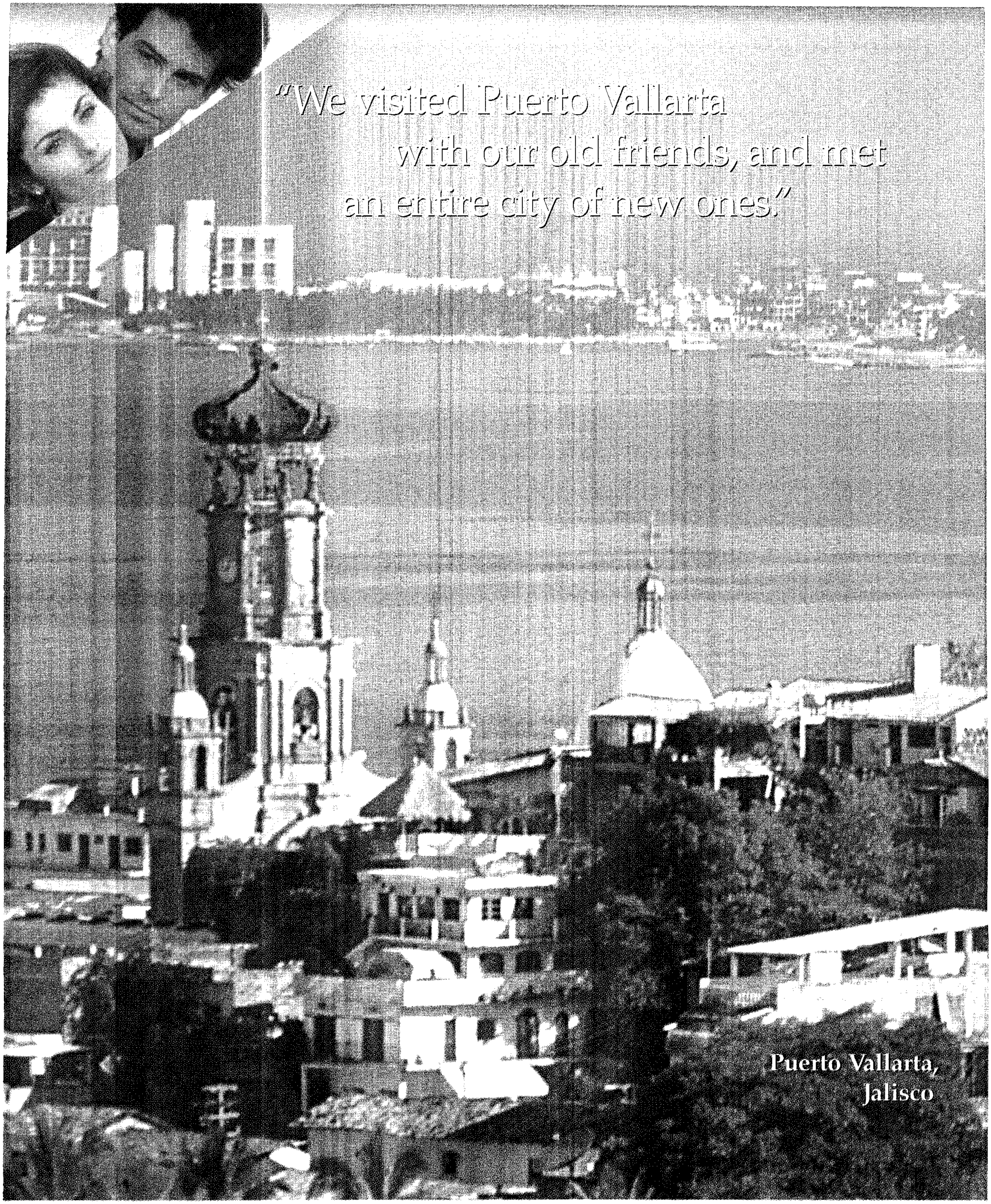
AMATO OPERA
The feisty East Village chamber-opera company completes its run of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci,"** directed and conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Nov. 22-23 at 7:30 and Nov. 24 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Yuri Temirkanov (sometimes thought of as that *other* Russian conductor) has a gift for delivering lean and sharply disciplined performances—a refreshing counterpoint to Valery Gergiev's technicolor majesty. Music by Ravel and Brahms (the Fourth Symphony) surrounds the program's centerpiece, a performance (with Dmitri Hvorostovsky) of Mussorgsky's "Songs and Dances of Death," which just might attain a volcanic intensity. (Nov. 21 and Nov. 25 at 7:30 and Nov. 23 at 8.) ♦ Temirkanov conducts the Brahms in a matinée concert that also includes a performance of Dvořák's Serenade for Winds. (Nov. 23 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

ENSEMBLE FOR EARLY MUSIC: "SIRENS AND HARPIES"
In celebration of St. Cecilia's Day, the historical-instrument group (with a small women's chorus) performs a program of medieval music by and about women, including contributions by Hildegard of Bingen and the anonymous creators of the Codex Las Huelgas. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 280-0330. Nov. 23 at 8 and Nov. 24 at 3.)

ORCHESTRE PHILHARMONIQUE DE RADIO FRANCE
This ensemble, founded in 1976 and only now making its New York début, is conducted by Myung-Whun Chung, a former protégé of Olivier Messiaen, whose mystical music he conducts with clarity and force—and which anchors the orchestra's two concerts at Carnegie Hall. Nov. 21 at 8: "L'Ascension," a vibrant early work, along with Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major (with Hélène Grimaud) and Saint-Saëns's "Organ" Symphony. ♦ Nov. 22 at 8: Debussy's substantial "La Mer" is but a prelude to Messiaen's exotic masterwork, the "Turangalîla-Symphonie." (247-7800.)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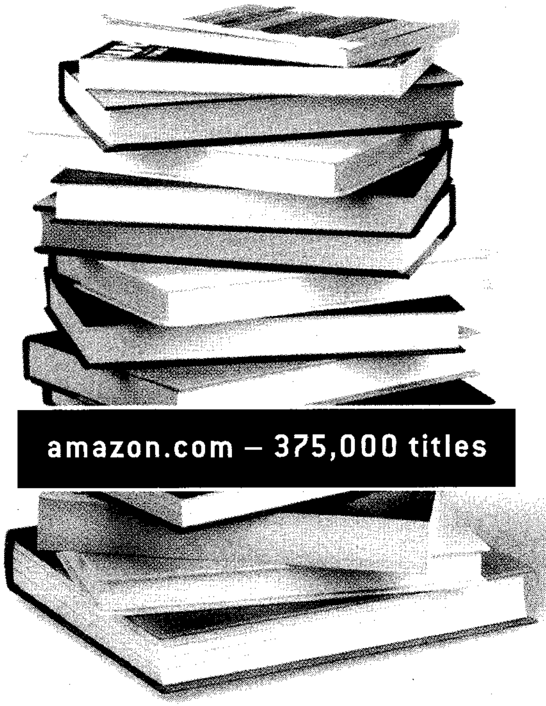

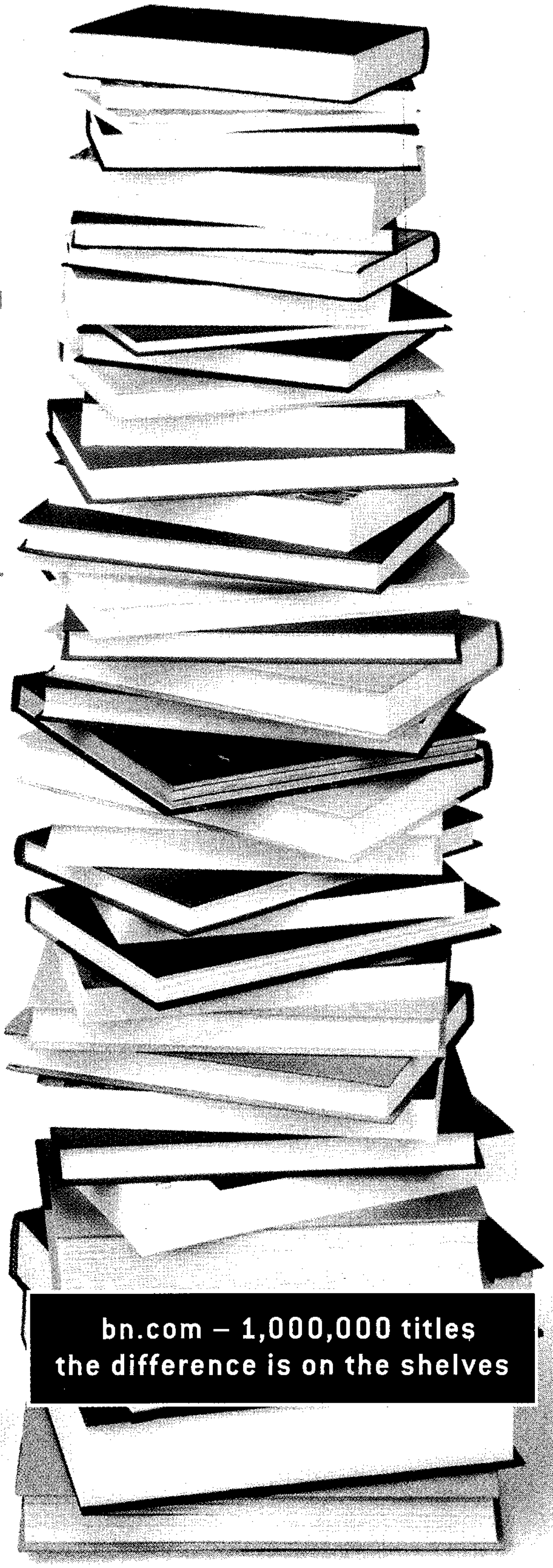
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RECITALS

PETER SERKIN
This pianist has always held to the notion that the notoriously "difficult" music produced by the twentieth-century modernists grew directly out of the sublime tradition of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms—a debatable proposition, but one never more seductive than when advanced by Serkin's playing, a near-perfect balance of the head and heart. In his latest Carnegie Hall recital, he makes his case in music by Wolpe (the Passacaglia) and Beethoven (the Sonata No. 30 and the "Diabelli" Variations). (247-7800. Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "DVOŘÁK AND THE AMERICAN SOUL"
The festival's artistic directors, Michael Barrett and Steven Blier, offer a concert exploring the kindly Bohemian's brief but profound influence on American composition, accompanying the singers Dana Hanchard, Dagmar Peckova, and James Martin in music by Dvořák and by two of his African-American students, Harry T. Burleigh and Will Marion Cook. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 20 at 8.)

DANIIL SHTODA
The young, sweet-voiced Russian tenor, the source of much recent critical ferment, makes his New York recital début in a program including music by Tchaikovsky, Dargomïzhsky, and Cui. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 21 at 8.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES
Two veteran radicals—George Marsh on drums, Pauline Oliveros on her just-intonation accordion—offer separate improvisational programs with the help of the baritone Thomas Buckner, the bassist Mel Graves, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Nov. 21 at 8.)

ROCKHOTEL PIANOFEST
Boston, a refuge for keyboard iconoclasts, has harbored the unusual career of Andrew Rangell, a free spirit whose bold and original playing (and quirky repertory) have made him a cult favorite. In the highlight of the series' fourth week of concerts, he offers a program of Sweelinck, Bach, Chopin, Janáček, Nielsen (the Suite, Op. 45), and Enescu; Max Levinson, another intellectual individualist, opens for him with a Bach partita. (Society Hall, Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 307-4100. Nov. 21 at 7:30. For a complete listing of concerts, see the festival's Web site, www.rockhotelpianofest.com.)

BARGEMUSIC
The floating chamber-music series presents Mozart's "Six Quartets Dedicated to Haydn," performed by an ensemble that includes the violinist Susanna Henkel and the violist Toby Hoffman. Nov. 21-22 at 7:30: Quartets Nos. 14-16. ♦ Nov. 23 at 7:30 and Nov. 24 at 4: Quartets Nos. 17 (the "Hunt"), 18, and 19 (the "Dissonant"). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

URSULA OPPENS
Oppens has been the fortunate recipient of a recent gift from Luciano Berio: a new piano sonata, which she premièred at Harvard last season. She offers the first New York performance of the work in an all-Berio program that also features "Circles," an E. E. Cummings song cycle (with Lucy Shelton), and two of the Sequenzas. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 279-4200. Nov. 22 at 7:30.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The violinist Cho-Liang Lin, the cellist Gary Hoffman, and the pianist André-Michel Schub gather for a program of the complete Brahms trios. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. Nov. 22 at 8 and Nov. 24 at 5.)

SHARON ISBIN
The renowned guitarist plays a globe-trotting concert of music from Britain, Spain, China (the première of a work by Tan Dun), and the United States. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Nov. 23 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS
Nov. 23 at 7:30: David Daniels, the ripe-voiced and virtuosic countertenor, sings an elegant recital of Mozart, Fauré, Britten, Handel, and others, with the pianist Martin Katz and a guest appearance by the tenor Anthony Dean Griffey. ♦ Nov. 25 at 7:30: The Tokyo String Quartet offers an evening of Schubert, Beethoven, and Mozart (a chamber version of the Piano Concerto in A Major, K. 414, with Alicia de Larrocha). ♦ Nov. 26 at 7:30: Hilary Hahn, whose smart, tactful, and technically impeccable playing has made her a superstar, plays music by Bloch, Schubert, Debussy, and Bach. (247-7800.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The author Robert Caro is the special guest for a program of Borodin, Alyabiev, and Prokofiev ("Peter and the Wolf," in the composer's arrangement for narrator, piano, and winds); the musicians include the pianist Ruth Laredo. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. Nov. 25 at 2 and 8.)

TIMOTHY FAIN
Young Concert Artists presents a recital by the elegant and adventurous young violinist, who performs music by Mendelssohn, Messiaen (an excerpt from the "Quartet for the End of Time"), and Mozart with the pianist Jeremy Denk, among others. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 307-6656. Nov. 25 at 7.)

VERDEHR TRIO
The ensemble—which has commissioned an entire repertory for its unusual instrumentation of violin, clarinet, and piano—celebrates its thirtieth anniversary with a concert of works by Bright Sheng, Ned Rorem, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Nov. 25 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"UNCLE JIMMY'S DIRTY BASEMENT"
This popular downtown rock-and-roll puppet show is true to its name. A simple backdrop depicts the gray confines of a subterranean storeroom, and it's not just the walls that are dirty—the humor is, too. Imagine a testosterone-addled episode of the television hit "That '70s Show" crossed with an alcohol-soaked version of the movie "Wayne's World," and you've reached the threshold of "Uncle Jimmy's Dirty Basement," where a bluesy punk band, a time-travelling clown-faced m.c., and a gang of perversely inventive puppets (anatomically correct robots; a three-eyed nephew constructed from a playground ball) skewer everything from the cranky mother upstairs to Christian spirituals. Nothing is safe, not even the audience's drinks. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. 330-8193. Fridays and Saturdays at 8. Through Dec. 21.)

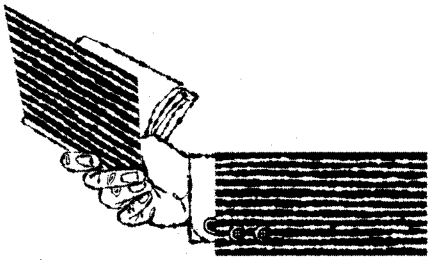
READINGS
Nov. 21 at 8: Elissa Schappell reads from her contribution to the essay collection "The Bitch in the House: 26 Women Tell the Truth About Sex, Solitude, Work, Motherhood, and Marriage," Dawn Raffel reads from her novel, "Carrying the Body," and Louisa Ermelino reads from her novel "The Sisters Mallone." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 24 at 2: Wave Hill presents an afternoon of tales about the earth, with Jane Brox, who will read from her memoir about life on a Massachusetts farm, "Five Thousand Days Like This One," and Leila Philip, who will offer passages from "A Family Place: A Hudson Valley Farm, Three Centuries, Five Wars, One Family." (249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For reservations, which are required, call 718-549-3200, ext. 308.)

TALKS
Nov. 20 at 7: The translator John Felstiner discusses the poets Pablo Neruda, Paul Celan, and Rainer Maria Rilke. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. 431-7920.) ♦ Nov. 26 at 6:45: Takumyo Hatanaka, a Japanese monk, Molly O'Meara Sheehan, a researcher with the Worldwatch Institute, and William G. Gregory, a former space-shuttle pilot, gather for a discussion about the beauty of the earth, accompanied by a traditional Japanese drum performance. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. For more information, call 719-2666.)

BOOK CURRENTS

All About Attire

Alan Flusser, who is the president of a men's-clothing company, thanks his Buddhist mentor on the dedication page of **DRESSING THE MAN** (HarperCollins), and his book offers a meditative—and encyclopedic—look at the state of male fashion. To Flusser, fashion is more than superficial: "The best-dressed men consistently demonstrate the greatest degree of self-knowledge," he writes, and the truly stylish man's outward appearance "derives from an evolved inward eye."



DRESSING IN THE DARK (Assouline) suggests that a man can learn fashion sense from a trip to the local video store. "Pay less attention to the acting and more to the way the clothes express character," writes Marion Maneker, whose text accompanies photographs of Michael Douglas in "Wall Street," Tom Cruise in "Rain Man," and Steve McQueen in just about anything. But sometimes a bit of the movie critic is visible in the fashion maven. "I Love Trouble," starring Julia Roberts and Nick Nolte, is deemed "forgettable for everything but Nolte's clothes," in this case a windowpane-plaid suit.

According to Lloyd Boston, who is a style commentator for the "Today" show, developing a wardrobe is something that a man shouldn't tackle alone. In **MAKE OVER YOUR MAN** (Broadway), Boston argues that a woman is responsible for transforming her "fashion beginner" into a "sartorial soldier." For example, a navy-blue suit is a necessity ("Your man can wear this almost three days out of a week") and, when choosing ties, "keep it simple, and keep the receipt." In an interview with Boston, Steven Plofker recognizes the significance of a woman's influence: "Men are accessories. Really, we are. And sometimes, women want to accessorize their accessory."

—*Marshall Heyman*

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

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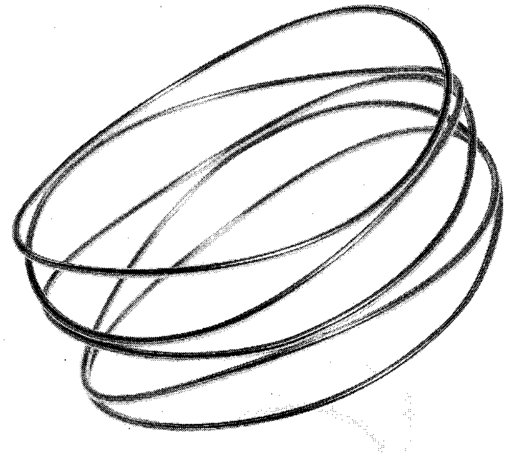

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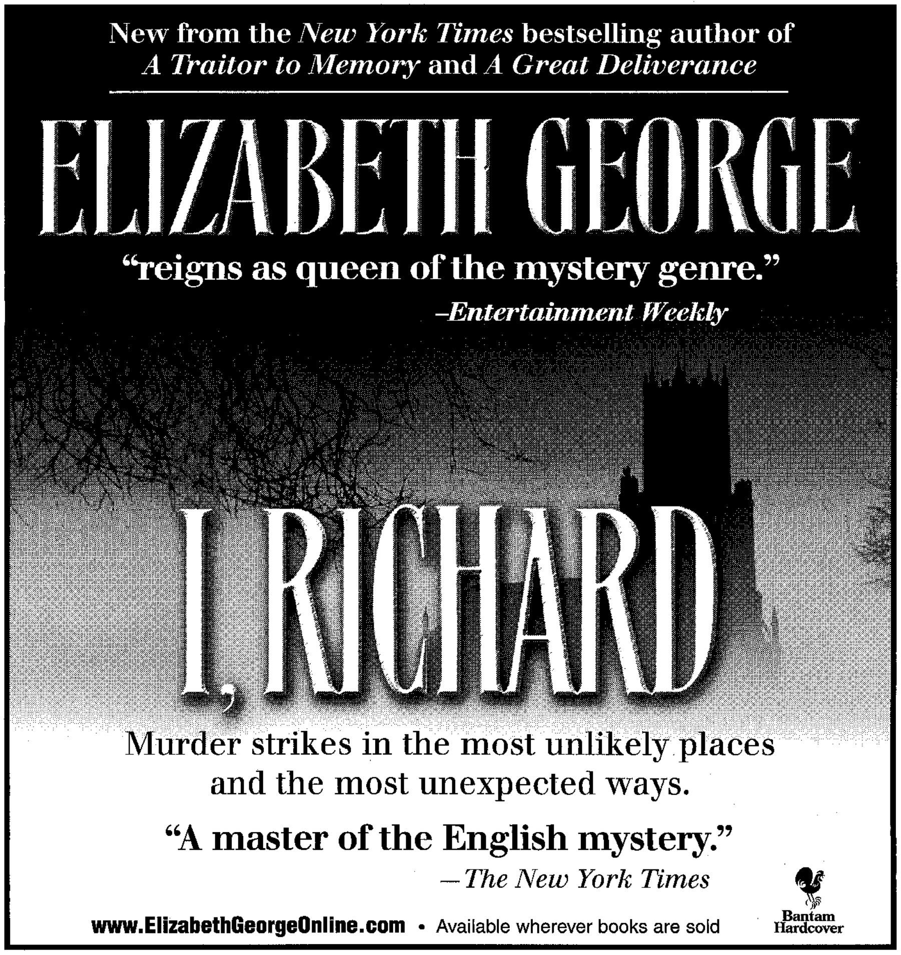

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MOVIES OPENING

BETTER HOUSEKEEPING!
A dark comedy, shot in reality-television style, about the feud between a working-class man who collects action figures and his unfaithful Italian-immigrant wife. Frank Novak directed. Opening Nov. 20. (Pioneer.)

THE BURNING WALL
Hava Kohav Beller directed this documentary, about dissidents in East Germany while it was a Communist satellite. In German and English. Opening Nov. 20. (Film Forum.)

DIE ANOTHER DAY
The twentieth James Bond film, directed by Lee Tamahori. With Pierce Brosnan, Halle Berry, Judi Dench, Toby Stephens, and John Cleese. Opening Nov. 22.

THE EMPEROR'S CLUB
A drama based on a short story by Ethan Canin, in which a prep-school teacher (Kevin Kline) mentors the rebellious son (Emile Hersch) of a West Virginia senator. Opening Nov. 22.

FRIDAY AFTER NEXT
In the third installment of the comedy series, Craig (Ice Cube) and Day Day (Mike Epps) become security guards at the local mall. Opening Nov. 22.

PERSONAL VELOCITY
The director Rebecca Miller adapts her own book of short stories about the lives of three women in rapid transition. With Fairuza Balk, Parker Posey, and Kyra Sedgwick. Opening Nov. 22. (Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

POWER AND TERROR:
NOAM CHOMSKY IN OUR TIMES
A documentary film about Chomsky's views on the events of September 11th. Opening Nov. 22. (Film Forum.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN
Phillip Noyce directed this adaptation of the novel by Graham Greene, set in Saigon during America's early involvement in Vietnam. Michael Caine plays an English journalist who befriends a newly arrived Yank (Brendan Fraser). With Do Thi Hai Yen as the woman they vie for. Opening Nov. 22.

'R XMAS
In Abel Ferrara's new film, one half of a Harlem drug-dealing couple (Drea de Matteo and Lillo Brancato) gets kidnapped on Christmas Eve. With Ice-T. Opening Nov. 22. (Cinema Village.)

TALK TO HER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 22. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

ARARAT
A complicated, not to say confusing, movie from Atom Egoyan. His subject is the massacre of the Armenians in 1915—a matter of abiding pain and significance to those of Armenian descent, such as the director himself. He approaches the problem from different angles: there is a historical epic, then the story of how that epic itself was cast and shot, then a delving into the lives of its performers, and so forth. There is even a long, implausible interview between a customs inspector (Christopher Plummer) and a young Armenian (David Alpay) who has just arrived in Canada; as the subplots ramify, we watch the effect of the genocide—as it is unequivocally called by its victims—on lives both close and distant. The trouble is that you can feel the history being used as much as examined; what is required, not least for American audiences, is an unerring clarity, and what they get is a stylish, near-numbing deadpan of mystification. With Bruce Greenwood and Charles Aznavour, who gives every sign of being immortal.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/02.) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

AUTO FOCUS
In the late sixties, Bob Crane (Greg Kinnear), the real-life star of the television series "Hogan's Heroes," links up with a video-technology salesman and hanger-on named John Carpenter (Willem Dafoe). In effect, the two men pimp for each other: Crane, the TV star with the devilish smile, attracts endless girls, some of whom sleep with Carpenter, and Carpenter, taping the proceedings, attracts a few girls with the cameras, too. The men, scoring night after night, engage in what you might call Old Sex—breast-fixated, impersonal, and brief. The director, Paul Schrader, doesn't try to turn us on; the movie is completely lacking in sensuality, full of mirthless fun and bland debauchery. Despite their extraordinary intimacy, the men loathe each other—there's nothing holding them together but unfulfilled homoerotic feelings. Kinnear is good as the smug, shallow Crane, but Dafoe is so creepy that it's hard to imagine anyone speaking, much less sleeping, with him.—*David Denby* (10/28/02) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Village Theatre VII.)

BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE
Michael Moore's rounded guzzler's belly hangs over his jeans, his shirt is untucked and probably untuckable, and his baseball cap covers a mass of unhealthy hair. He's an American satirist disguised as a loser. In his latest provocation—a documentary mixing stock footage, interviews, gun-dealer advertisements, and the like—he goes after America's gun culture, which he sees as the product of a collective guilt over slavery and the slaughter of Native Americans, a guilt that manifests itself in paranoia and a relentless obsession with security. Moore, as always, is less a reliable or coherent thinker than a left-wing joker with a camera, but some of his mocking sallies have a way of hitting their target.—*D.D.* (10/28/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

EL CRIMEN DEL PADRE AMARO
When the Catholic authorities in Mexico got wind of this movie, which tells of the affair between a young priest and a sixteen-year-old virgin, they threatened to excommunicate its two young stars. Bad move. A curious and aroused public turned out in droves to see exactly how Father Amaro (Gael García Bernal) and Amelia (Ana Claudia Talancón) would go about breaking the seventh commandment. To be sure, there's a fair amount of steamy sacrilege, but it's not quite the last tango the trailer would lead you to expect. The director, Carlos Carrera, turns out to be a man of serious intent, portraying the Catholic church as a fallible institution, inextricably linked, for better or worse, to all levels of Mexican society. This is done mostly through the compromised life of an older priest, Father Benito (played, with dignity, by the veteran actor Sancho Gracia), who has a mistress and a cozy relationship with the local drug lord. The story's many strands require a deft touch, and not surprisingly the movie goes away from Carrera; the second half devolves into soap-opera plotting and scenes transparently designed for maximum shock value. In Spanish.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

8 MILE
In Eminem's first movie, the white rap star plays a barely disguised version of his pre-celebrity self: Jimmy Smith, Jr., a wounded young man who lives in a trailer in inner-city Detroit with his slatternly mother (Kim Basinger). During jousts at a local club, Jimmy goes up against the best black rappers and fights for the respect of the black audience. These improvised raps are his only release, a spasmodic assertion of self. Curtis Hanson, working from a script by Scott Silver, lays out the narrative and the character relationships methodically, even slowly. The movie may be a shrewdly engineered piece of proletarian pop in the tradition of "Rocky" and "Saturday Night Fever," but Eminem's vile candor gives it a convincingly gritty tone, and the great Mexican cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto ("Amores Perros") keeps the visual palette ugly and raw. With Mekhi Phifer as a local rap impresario and Brittany Murphy as a bright-eyed little mover who takes to Jimmy.—*D.D.* (11/11/02) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

FAR FROM HEAVEN
An immaculate new movie from Todd Haynes, the purveyor of "Safe" and "Velvet Goldmine." This project teams him once again with Julianne Moore, who looks set to become the Catherine Deneuve to Haynes's Buñuel. Here she plays—or incarnates, to the last inch of her hemline—a wife and mother, living in Hartford in 1957. All is well, if brittle, until she drops by to see her husband (Dennis Quaid) in his office after hours, and finds him entwined with a man. From here on, their lives start to shred and scatter; she herself falls for the gardener (Dennis Haysbert), who is not only black but, to all appearances, perfect. With tact and care, the movie digs into all the subjects that lay concealed below the surface when Max Ophuls and Douglas Sirk were filming their own melodramas in the nineteen-fifties. As an exercise in style, it cannot be faulted, and Moore takes us by surprise, even by storm, with the wealth and fullness of her feeling; yet there remains something prim in the whole endeavor—we know better than these beleaguered people did, and the movie can hardly help congratulating us, and itself, on that knowledge.—*A.L.* (11/18/02) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

FEMME FATALE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

FRIDA
At the center of Julie Taymor's vibrant bio-pic is the relationship (always described as "tempestuous") between the great Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina) and the talented painter Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek). After an hour or so of this Punch-and-Judy show, with its noisy drinking, hurling of kitchen items, partings, and reconciliations, you may want to knock both lovers flat with an enormous chili pepper. Yet "Frida" is much better than it has any right to be. The movie has a rambunctious spirit and a liberated sense of color—an appreciation of the raw, strong Mexican folk tradition that gave both artists their special juice. Taymor and a gaggle of screenwriters are much too shrewd to accept the sentimental feminist view that Frida was Diego Rivera's victim. Smart, willful, and perverse, this Frida is nobody's servant, and the tiny Hayek plays her with head held high.—*D.D.* (11/11/02) (Angelika Film Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and 19th Street East 6.)

HALLELUJAH, I'M A BUM
This graceful 1933 romantic comedy, shot in sepia tones in imaginative Art Deco sets, and with a Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart score, failed when it came out, and it has never attracted much of an audience. Maybe that's because its star is Al Jolson, and people just didn't expect him to be in a stylized, so-

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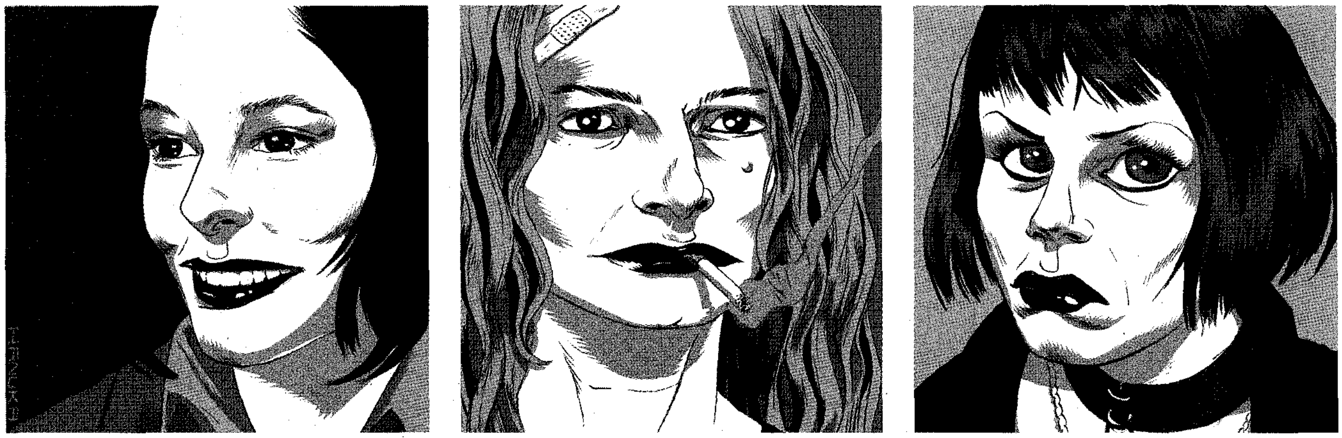
phisticated, and lyrical movie. He's very good in it, and he doesn't wear blackface or get on his knees to sing. Directed by Lewis Milestone, who just takes it easy, so we can enjoy his finesse. The whimsical script was written by S. N. Behrman and Ben Hecht, and Rodgers and Hart provided a recitative in rhyming couplets. The time is the Depression. Wearing a white suit and hat and a dark shirt, Jolson is Bumper, the "mayor" of a group of hobos who hang out in Central Park—happy-go-lucky thirties versions of beatniks. The film is uneven, but it has some of the rhythm and charm of the early-thirties René Clair musicals (especially "À Nous la Liberté"), and it has the lovely song "You Are Too Beautiful."—*Pauline Kael* (Gramercy Theatre; Nov. 24.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

Two down, presumably five to go, and already the franchise is entering dangerous territory: if you aren't one of the many who know their Harry Potter chapter and verse, prepare for a nap. Like its predecessor, the movie is overlong and devoutly faithful to the book: the director Chris Columbus does everything but film J. K. Rowling's semicolons. Most of the original cast returns—a good thing—but so do many of the limp visual ideas. Kenneth Branagh, in a hammy role, makes for a welcome addition to the Hogwarts faculty, and it would have been fun to see him mix it up more with Alan Rickman. But all of the what-ifs matter little, as Columbus's film won't disappoint an eager audience that often calls out Harry's next move before it happens.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HEAVENLY CREATURES

In 1954, two teen-age girls in Christchurch, New Zealand, Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme, murdered the mother of one of them after tea and a stroll through a park. With a narrative that begins with the aftermath and flashes back to the start of the girls' friendship, this frequently astonishing 1994 film was Peter Jackson's breakthrough: a split from farcical gorefests like "Braindead" and a prelude to "The Lord of the Rings." The imperious, glamorous, and tubercular Juliet (Kate Winslet), and the doughy, literary, and bone-disease-scarred Pauline (Melanie Lynskey) base their bond on a shared loved for Mario Lanza and James Mason and collaborative art projects. Out of plasticine and medieval fable, they mold a fantasy world filled with romance, poetry—and executions. Jackson's triumph is that he makes us feel part of the girls' swoon into perilous escapism without overblowing the oppressiveness of their homes or school. Whenever the movie blurs the line between reality and psychotic vision, it does so for a point. Jackson maintains the plot's fever pitch with a rush of visual invention.—*Michael Sragow* (Gramercy Theatre; Nov. 23.)



Parker Posey, Kyra Sedgwick, and Fairuza Balk in Rebecca Miller's triptych film, "Personal Velocity," opening November 22.

TOMER HANUKA

THE PHANTOM PRESIDENT

This 1932 musical political satire was George M. Cohan's first talking picture; for anyone who cares about American theatrical history it's an indispensable record of Cohan's style—which is almost nothing like the styles of James Cagney and Joel Grey when they played Cohan (on the screen and the stage, respectively). Cohan is dapper and bland; he seems to wear a mask of ordinariness, and only the droopy-lidded eyes, and sometimes the awareness in the smile, clue us in to the theatrical instinct at work. One doesn't know quite what to make of him or his smooth technique. There's a good satirical idea here: Cohan plays a double role—a quiet Presidential candidate and the extroverted look-alike who campaigns for him. With Claudette Colbert, Jimmy Durante, Alan Mowbray, George Barbier, Sidney Toler, and Jameson Thomas. The songs are by Cohan, except for Rodgers and Hart's "Give Her a Kiss."—*P.K.* (Gramercy Theatre; Nov. 23 and Nov. 25.)

PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Paul Thomas Anderson's whimsical romantic comedy is a bit like an amusement-park ride that builds tremendous forward momentum and then suddenly juts to the side. Even those of us who enjoy perversity in movies may be put off by its skittering, against-the-beat rhythms. Adam Sandler plays Barry Egan, a frightened fellow in a bright-blue suit, a nerd who sells merchandise out of a San Fernando Valley warehouse and stammers his way through the simplest encounters. At dawn, a harmonium is dropped from a truck outside the warehouse; a bit later, a lovely woman (Emily Watson) inexplicably falls in love with Barry as the music track offers drumbeats in arbitrary counterpoint to the imagery—in fact, everything that happens is arbitrary, and the characters are mysterious without becoming interesting. Anderson wants to say something quirky and powerful about love and the miraculousness of ordinary lives, but his world neither intersects with ours at any point nor hangs together as an independent magical creation. There are touches out of Harold Lloyd's and Jacques Tati's comedies and old Hollywood musicals, but just touches.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

THE RING

Gore Verbinski's film, a retelling of the hit 1998 Japanese thriller, is a cold, arty exercise in scary moviemaking. Naomi Watts, in a strong performance, stars as a newspaper reporter who discovers a videotape that promises death to the viewer a week after it's seen. The movie's nifty beginning—all anxiety and dread—suggests that the audience is in for a fearful ride, but the one-dimensional story quickly runs out of fuel. Verbinski desaturates the film's colors (muddy browns and jaundiced yellows) in a vague attempt at atmosphere. Although he manages to pull off a few spectacular fright moments, the tension never really kicks in.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ROGER DODGER

A smart and sulfurous début from the writer and director Dylan Kidd. Campbell Scott stars as Roger, whose career is in advertising but whose raison d'être is the untiring pursuit of sex. (Almost no love is made in the film, yet the craving for it fills every frame.) Having been jilted by his lover (Isabella Rossellini), who also happens to be his boss, Roger goes hunting by night, in the company of his callow nephew (Jesse Eisenberg) from Ohio. The twist is simple enough: the older man has much to teach but even more to learn. Being Roger, however, he refuses to improve, and it's the bullish, unsentimental drive of the movie that insures its comic kick. The supporting cast, including Jennifer Beals and Elizabeth Berkley, plays nicely off the central monster, but this is Scott's movie all the way. He is rarely off camera, but he does not abuse that privilege; there is restraint, and far more wit than you'd expect, in his dazzling depiction of a rampage.—*A.L.* (11/4/02) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SPIRITED AWAY

In his native Japan, the animator-director Hayao Miyazaki is considered a national treasure, and this movie, which he came out of retirement to complete, recently surpassed "Titanic" as that country's highest-grossing picture. It's an amazing work, displaying a visual intelligence that's meticulously composed and obscenely clever. Miyazaki's playful aesthetic is like a Japanese word that can't be adequately translated, best approximated as part Spielberg, part Dr. Seuss. "Mature" American audiences may be put off at first by a film that is essentially a cartoon about a fearful ten-year-old girl. But as the hero, Chihiro, sees her parents turned into swine and flees into an alternate world filled with the creatures of Japanese mythology and of Miyazaki's own invention, any distracting sense of childishness falls away. Left to savor are virtuoso touches, like a flock of birds that become useless paper, a train that glides along the surface of a lake, and one of the great villains of all time, Yubaba, who looks like a bobble-headed grandmother on speed.—*M.A.* (Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.)

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE

Why remake "Charade"? Stanley Donen's movie is known and loved for its pairing of Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn. Jonathan Demme has kept tightly to the story, although you could argue that it was only the stars who made the story worth considering in the first place. We are still in Paris, but this time we get Mark Wahlberg and Thandie Newton; she plays the young widow, and he is the mysterious friend, or agent, who apparently comes to her aid. Newton has no problems with the stylish panic of the role, but Wahlberg seems ominously out of his depth; however many berets you clap on his head, he still looks like a man who would rather be on the planet of the apes. Fortu-

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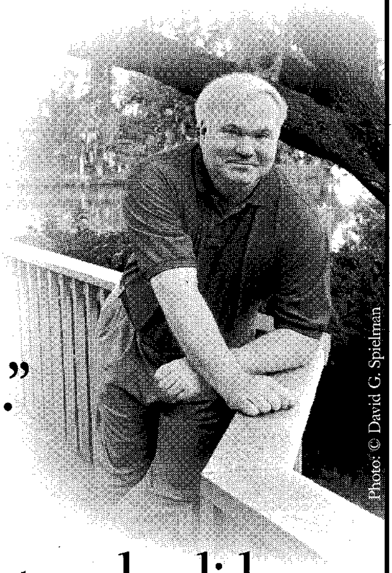

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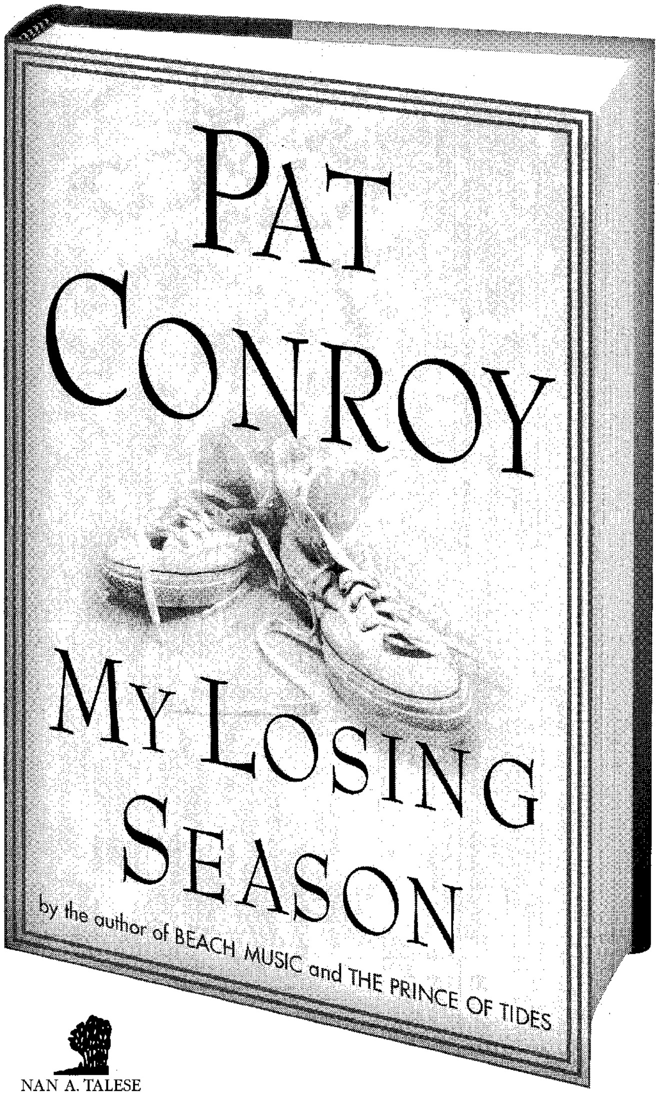

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—*The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans)

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—*Newsweek*

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DOUBLEDAY

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nately, the surrounding landscape has its pleasures; Demme's manner is looser and funkier than Donen's, and the Paris we see is a jamboree of teeming streets and suspicious citizens, hopped up on a soundtrack of world music. The film is hilariously indifferent to the conundrum of the plot—the solution may even be found on the poster, for those who care—but it is sustained, just about, by the buoyancy of its mood. With Tim Robbins as a villain on a Ferris wheel (shades of Harry Lime), and the alluring Christine Boisson as a cop.—*A.L.* (11/4/02) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, and Village Theatre VII.)

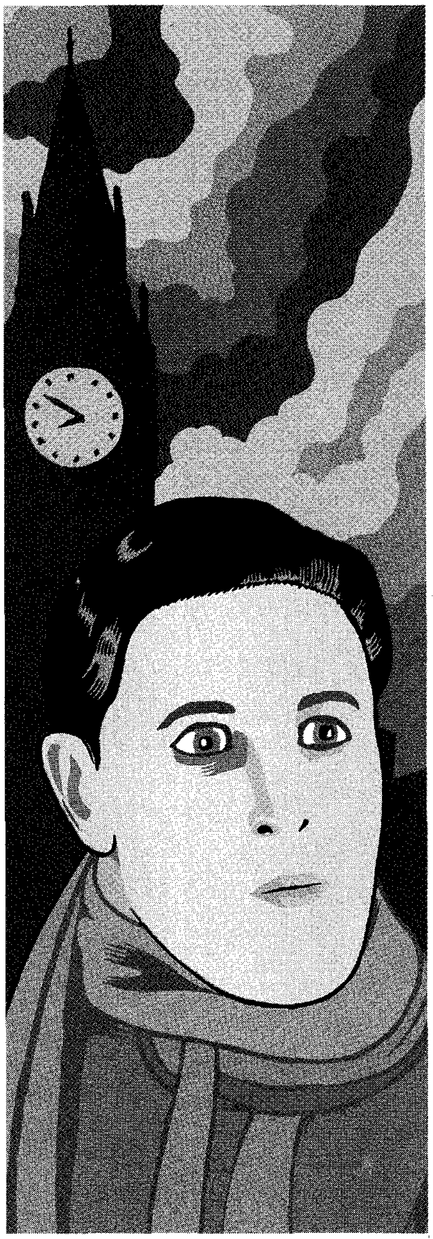
ALSO PLAYING

COMEDIAN
Cinema 3, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Sunshine Cinema.
8 WOMEN (9/16/02)
Empire 25 and The Screening Room.
MOSTLY MARTHA
Cinema Village and Sutton 1 and 2.
SECRETARY (9/23/02)
Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.
STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN
Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and 62nd & Broadway.
TULLY
Kew Gardens Cinema and Village East Cinemas.
THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER (10/7/02)
Film Forum.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



Alfred Hitchcock's "The Lodger" screens at the Walter Reade Theatre as part of a tribute to Ivor Novello.

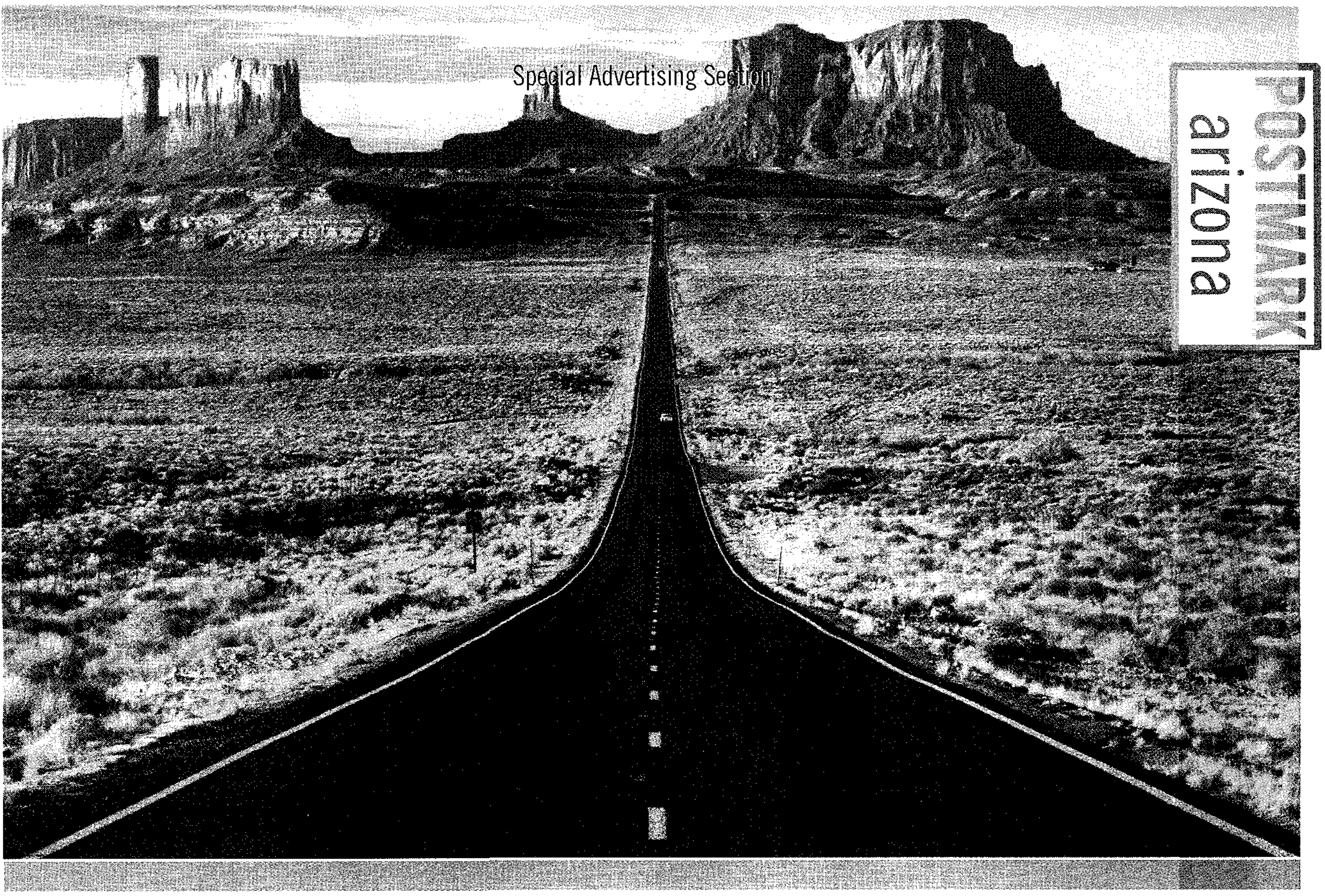
MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—World cinema showcase. Nov. 22 at 8: "The Terrorist" (1998, Santosh Sivan). ♦ Through Dec. 29: A Martin Scorsese retrospective. Nov. 23 at 2: "The Last Waltz" (1978). ♦ Nov. 23 at 4:15: "American Boy" (1978) and "Martin Scorsese Directs" (1990, Joel Sucher and Steven Fischler). ♦ Nov. 24 at 2: "Raging Bull" (1980), followed by a conversation with the film editor Thelma Schoonmaker. ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 23-24 at 6:30: "Powaqqatsi" (1988, Godfrey Reggio).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through Nov. 30: "From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War on Film." Nov. 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The War at Home" (2000, Glenn Silber and Barry Alexander Brown). ♦ Nov. 21 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Daughter from Danang" (2002, Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco). ♦ Nov. 22 at 2, 5, and 9: "Regret to Inform" (2000, Barbara Sonneborn) and "Hidden Warriors: Women of the Ho Chi Minh Trail" (2002, Karen Turner). ♦ Nov. 23 at 2, 5:20, and 8:50: "The Deer Hunter" (1978, Michael Cimino). ♦ Nov. 24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Bat*21" (1988, Peter Markle). ♦ Nov. 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Casualties of War" (1989, Brian De Palma). ♦ Nov. 26 at 7:30: "Breathe In/Breathe Out" (2000, Beth B). ♦ Nov. 26 at 9:30: "Karma" (1986, Ho Quang Minh).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Nov. 20-21 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "Singin' in the Rain" (1952, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen). ♦ Nov. 22-26 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Beyond the Valley of the Dolls" (1970, Russ Meyer).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Neo-noir films. Nov. 26 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Le Poulpe" (1998, Guillaume Nicloux; in French).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (777-4900)—Through Dec. 2: A centennial celebration of the composer Richard Rodgers. Nov. 21 at 6:15 and Nov. 22 at 8:45: "The Hot Heiress" (1931, Clarence Badger). ♦ Nov. 22 at 2: "Richard Rodgers: The Sweetest Sounds" (2001, Roger Sherman). ♦ Nov. 22 at 4:15 and Nov. 23 at 7:30: "Dancing Lady" (1933, Robert Z. Leonard). ♦ Nov. 22 at 6:15 and Nov. 23 at 1: "Masters of Melody" (1929, Jay Kaufman) and "Love Me Tonight" (1932, Rouben Mamoulian). ♦ Nov. 23 at 3:30: "Heavenly Creatures" (†). ♦ Nov. 23 at 5:45: "Mississippi" (1935, A. Edward Sutherland). ♦ Nov. 23 at 9:15 and Nov. 25 at 2: "The Phantom President" (†). ♦ Nov. 24 at 1: "The Sound of Music" (1965, Robert Wise). ♦ Nov. 24 at 4:30: "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum" (†). ♦ Nov. 24 at 6:30: "Dancer in the Dark" (2000, Lars Von Trier). ♦ Nov. 25 at 6:15: "State Fair" (1945, Walter Lang). ♦ Through Nov. 21: "Variations on an Enigma," a tribute to the actress Delphine Seyrig. Nov. 21 at 2: "Letters Home" (1986, Chantal Akerman; in French). ♦ Nov. 21 at 4:15: "Golden Eighties (Window Shopping)" (1986, Akerman; in French). ♦ Nov. 21 at 8:15: "On the Move" (1979, Márta Mészáros; in Hungarian).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Nov. 22-23: "Live Flesh" (1997, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish).
THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Recent cinema from Brazil. Nov. 23 at 7 and Nov. 24 at 2:30: "Days of Nietzsche in Turin" (2001, Julio Bressane) and "Villa-Lobos" (2000, Zelito Viana). ♦ Nov. 24 at 7: "O Xangô de Baker Street" (2001, Miguel Faria, Jr.) and "The Inheritance" (2001, Daniel Filho). ♦ Special event. Nov. 23 at 2: Max and Dave Fleisher's original Superman cartoons (1941-43).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Nov. 27: "Transcendent Realism: New and Old Cinema from Belgium." Nov. 20 at 1 and Nov. 22 at 4:45: "Villa des Roses" (2002, Frank van Passel). ♦ Nov. 20 at 7, Nov. 21 at 4:15, and Nov. 23 at 9:15: "The Promise" (1996, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne). ♦ Nov. 20 at 9:15, Nov. 21 at 2, and Nov. 22 at 9:15: "Less Dead Than Others" (1992, Frans Buyens). ♦ Nov. 22 at 3:30 and 7: "Thursday We Shall Sing Like Sunday" (1967, Luc de Heusch). ♦ Nov. 23 at 1:30: "Les Enfants de l'Amour" (2001, Geoffrey Enthoven). ♦ Nov. 23 at 3:30 and 7:30 and Nov. 26 at 3:15: Animated films by Raoul Servais (1966-2001). ♦ Nov. 23 at 5:15: "Toto the Hero" (1991, Jaco van Dormael). ♦ Nov. 26 at 1: "Osveta" (2001, Jan Hintjens). ♦ Special event. Nov. 21 at 7:30: A talk with Michael Ondaatje followed by a screening of "The Conversation" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ A tribute to Ivor Novello. Nov. 24 at 4: "The Lodger" (1926, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Nov. 24 at 8: "Love from Ivor," a live musical tribute. ♦ Documentaries from the French-German television station ARTE. Nov. 25 at 2 and 6:30: "Public Enemy" (1999, Jens Meurer). ♦ Nov. 25 at 4:15 and 8:45: "American Dream" (2002, Christopher Corves and Delia Castiñeira).

POSTMARK arizona



Monument Valley © Paul A.Souders/CORBIS; *bottom clockwise*: Miraval, Chiaroscuro Gallery, The Sanctuary.

changing lanes

BY JIM CALIO

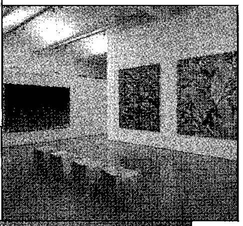
Winter in Arizona is high season—with warm days, cool nights, and endless skies the norm. The air is clear, the landscape a union of desert and mountains. Stylish resorts and spas, as well as championship golf courses that rise from the Grand Canyon State's rugged natural surroundings, draw those looking for an epiphanous detour off the fast lane.

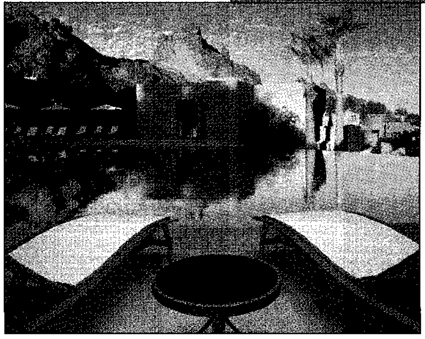
Phoenix and nearby Scottsdale are at the heart of the resort and spa boom of central Arizona. The Phoenician in Scottsdale that has been called "Xanadu in the Desert," lives up to the moniker with a twenty-two-thousand-foot Centre for Well-Being spa, twenty-seven championship holes of golf, a glowing menu of massage and bodywork therapies, and floor-to-ceiling views of the valley and Camelback Mountain. If there is a jewel in the crown of the Valley of the Sun, The Phoenician is it.

Not to be outdone, the nearby Camelback Inn, built in 1936, harkens back to an earlier era of bolo ties (still the tie of choice in Arizona) and Lucchese cowboy boots, when luxe resorts in Arizona were few and far between. Guests are immediately struck by the Southwestern charm of the place, from the dark wood *latilla* beams inside and out to a gallery of black-and-white photos by the late Senator Barry Goldwater. In a recent forty-five-million-dollar renovation, all of the inn's rooms were refurbished.

With pro teams like the Suns, the Cardinals, and the Diamondbacks, Phoenix is known as Arizona's sports and entertainment center. In January, the Tournament Players Club will host the Phoenix Open, a sanctioned stop on the PGA Tour. It doesn't hurt that the course is right next to the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, a terra-cotta fantasy replete with palm trees, fountains, and waterfalls. The area around the eighteenth green can accommodate thousands of spectators and it's easy to imagine them cheering in unison as you trudge up the final fairway—until, of course, you double-bogey the last hole.

Arizona resort spas include everything from Pilates and *Jin Shin Jyutsu*





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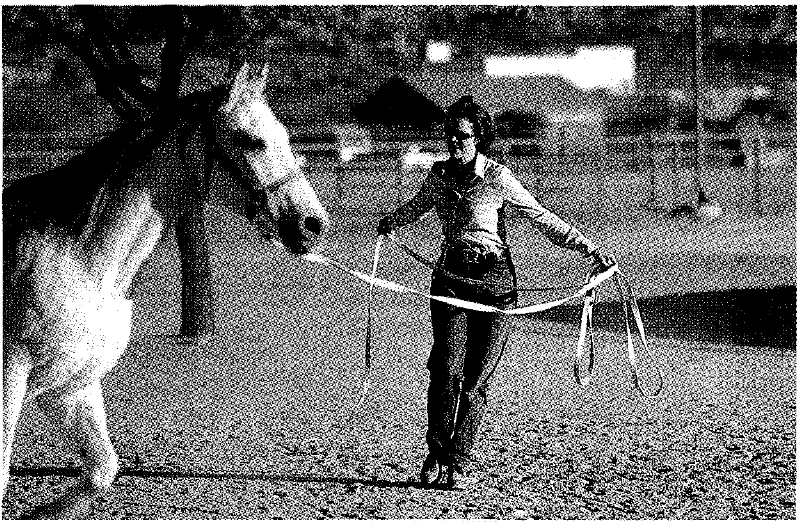
treatments to tennis, golf, horseback riding, and rock climbing. The new Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain (no relation to the Camelback Inn) qualifies as a full-service boutique resort and spa, with twenty-four spa casitas built on two levels and a reception area that resembles a shrine. A Zen meditation garden, twenty-five-yard shaded outdoor lap pool, and in-room tea ceremonies complete the impression of serenity. The Sanctuary encourages the use of its fitness center and Far Eastern-inspired body treatments, as well as offers tennis, hiking and biking trails, and mountain climbing.

Galleries abound in Scottsdale, especially along Old Town's historic Main Street. The Vanier Gallery specializes in contemporary paintings, sculpture, and works on paper by nationally and internationally acclaimed artists. Chiaroscuro's emphasis is on contemporary art and photography. But for authentic Native American art, a visit to the Heard Museum in Phoenix is a must. What is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of Navajo, Apache, and Hopi art to be found anywhere in the United States is on exhibit here. This stands to reason because Arizona is the home of the Navajo Nation, the biggest reservation in the country. Original fine arts and crafts like Navajo rugs and silver jewelry, Hopi pottery, kachina dolls, and Zuni inlaid stone jewelry are for sale at the museum.

Perhaps because it is a hundred miles south of Phoenix and closer to the Mexican border, Tucson seems to have cornered the market on outstanding Southwestern restaurants. Two years ago, Executive Chef Janos Wilder, owner of Janos, garnered the James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Southwest, and his reputation has only grown since then. Sit down in one of the hand-carved Mexican pine chairs and order from a menu of French-inspired Southwestern treats that include Guava-roasted Duck and Desert Pear Essence, Mushroom-stuffed Braised Chicken with Creamy Polenta, or Chili Brown Sugar Rubbed Pork.

Tucson's Miraval, in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, purports to bring balance back into your life. One example, the "equine experience," designed to hone nonverbal communication skills and to put you in better harmony with nature, assigns each guest their own horse to groom and care for. Miraval's renowned menu fuses Southwestern with Mediterranean and Thai cuisine, but you can stray off the low-cal path with its extensive wine list or indulge in a hot-fudge sundae if the urge beckons.

Venture north of Phoenix to Boynton Canyon and Sedona, the land of red boulders and cliffs considered sacred by locals. At Mii Amo, the stand-alone spa at the Enchantment Resort, you can partake of Native American beauty secrets like detoxifying Sedona-clay masques and body polish that blends blue corn and mineral salt crystals. Or if you choose, get wrapped in herbs while watching the hawks float lazily overhead. This is the special magic of Arizona in winter.



courtesy of Miraval, Life in Balance

HORSE SENSE

Guests at Miraval learn to better relate to the world by working with horses.

CHANCE TO WIN

SPARIZONA SWEEPS

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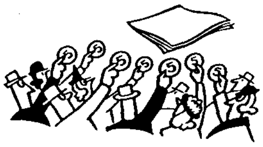
THE NEW YORKER

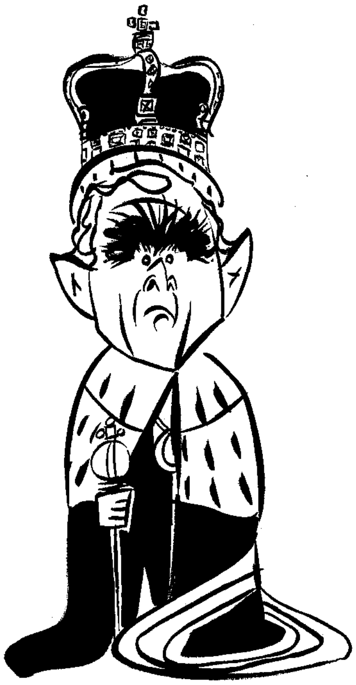
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DI NASTIES



November has been such an all-round triumph for the Bushes, what with the President's sweep of the congressional races, the thumping reëlection of the President's kid brother to the governorship of Florida, and the fifteen-nil Security Council vote for the President's resolution on Iraq, that the *Times* decided to give the whole family a promotion. In the Week in Review section of last Sunday's paper, the headline "Flying Colors: Defying Expectations, a Bush Dynasty Begins to Look Real" was superimposed in white against the blue sky of a heroic, page-wide photograph of Air Force One. So it's official. They're a dynasty. They're up there with the Adamses, the Bonapartes, and the Mings.

Meanwhile, in other dynastic news the Windsor family, of London, England, has been having a bad crown day. *Annus horribilis* has stretched into *centuria calamitosa*. In the din of an uproar surrounding one Paul Burrell, a butler in the employ of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, a story has emerged that combines elements of "Scoop," "Love in a Cold Climate," and "Jeeves in the Offing." The picture is one of a palace in which a midafternoon homosexual rape is covered up by Prince Charles; Prince Philip sends his daughter-in-law a note calling her a "trollop"; and the distressed Princess—queen of drama if never of England, empress of aromatherapy if never of India—tries insistently to summon her doctor boyfriend, who happens to be performing open-heart surgery at the time. (Burrell, having sold his story for big bob to the *Daily Mirror*, was in New York last week, pondering such offers as a game show to be called "What the Butler Saw.") Some of this is mere allegation, but it must be said that past experience with the Windsors argues for a suspension of disbelief. (Squidgy, anyone?) The wacky self-regard, the gothic morbidity, the sheer weirdness of the Windsor Bunch makes the prospect of the holidays with one's own relatives somewhat easier to take. This is a family in which even the Queen is a paranoiac. Last week, Burrell went on British television and recalled what he said was a three-hour-long conversation with the ordinarily conversation-resistant monarch. At one point, Burrell said, the Queen told him, "Be careful, Paul. There are powers at work in this country of which we have no knowledge." By midweek, the breakfast shows were playing host to republicans arguing for an end to it all. Perhaps they are the dark powers.



The Bushes, for their part, are no slouches in the petty-scandal department. But our tabloids are a lot tamer than the old country's. The United States has nothing like the *Mirror* or the *Sun*, which sells close to four million copies on a good day—the equivalent, proportionately, of an American daily with a circulation of eighteen million. By British standards, our *Daily News* and even the *Post* are church newsletters, so the Windsorian devilments of sundry Bushes—the trips to the clink for underage drinking, the drug busts, the parking-lot sex romps, the D.U.I. adventures, the business irregularities—don't provide the kind of lingering, sadistic, never-ending reading pleasure that the British public expects from the family of a Head of State.

The big difference between the Windsors and the Bushes is that the Windsors are going to be harder to dislodge. Admittedly, it may not look that way. The electorate has twice said no to Bushes (of the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

George subcategory), in 1992 and 2000, but they're still here, and they have an ample supply of brothers, nephews, and nieces. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably certain that some other family will eventually take their place at the top. There is no such assurance about the Windsors.

The British excel at peaceful transfers of power at the prime ministerial level, but at the royal level the process can get messy. Take the Plantagenet dynasty. Its original line came to an end with the murder of Richard II; its Lancastrian line terminated with the murder of Henry VI; and its final, or Yorkist, line died out at the last battle of the Wars of the Roses, when Richard III lost his horse at an awkward moment. The transitions have grown gentler in tandem with the decline in the monarchy's political power. Getting rid of the Stuarts, which had to be done twice, involved beheading a king (Charles I) the first time but merely exiling one (James II) the second. And the switch from the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to the House of Windsor was a snap: in 1917, George V simply changed his family's embarrassingly German name to Windsor.

The famous speech delivered by Earl Spencer, Diana's brother, at her funeral illustrates the monarchy's current stasis. Once upon a time, that speech would have been seen as either treason or insurrection. The Earl would have been (quite rightly) packed off to the Tower, or else he would have been honor-bound to seize the throne himself—in which case we would now be reading about the House of Spencer. If the Earl's divorce proceedings are any guide, tabloid sales would continue to be robust.

Civil wars and beheadings no longer being live options, the British seemingly must choose between proclaiming a republic and bleaching their royals into a Norwegian-style monarchy, with a middle-class king in an off-the-rack suit hurrying to catch the bus. Most likely, they will do neither. The Queen may or may not have much political clout, but the British Tourist Authority has plenty.

On this side of the water, would-be First Families proliferate like guppies. In the election, Romneys, Pryors, Doles, and Sununus added themselves to a political gene pool already awash in Tafts, Bayhs, Clintons, Udalls, Jacksons, and Chafees. It was a bad year for full-blooded Kennedys, especially in Maryland, but for at least one Kennedy in-law the picture was bright. In California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the husband of the daughter of a sister of J.F.K., headed a successful campaign for a ballot initiative on behalf of after-school programs. He, in consequence, is positioned to run for governor in four years' time. The bad news or the good news, depending, is that he's a Republican. The good news or the bad news, also depending, is that, by the grace of Article II of the Constitution, he (along with all other Austrian-born action stars) is ineligible to be President. The dynasty stops here.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

MAY I HELP YOU DEPT.

AN EAST-WEST THING

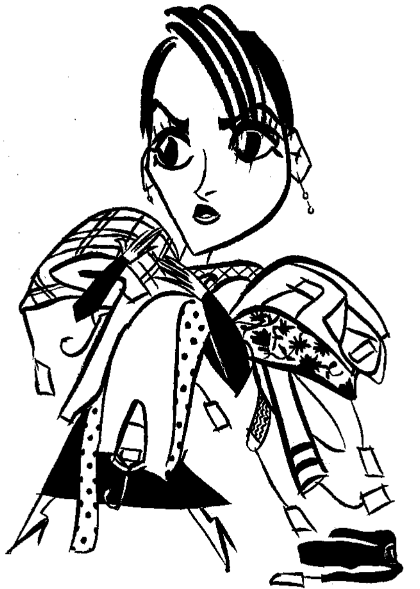
It may take decades for historians to produce a satisfactory analysis of the Winona Ryder shoplifting trial. As the world now knows, a jury in Beverly Hills recently convicted Ryder of two felony counts relating to her attempted theft of $5,560.40 worth of goods from Saks Fifth Avenue there last December 12th. The case has also attracted scrutiny at Saks' flagship store, across from Rockefeller Center, in Manhattan, and the verdict there seems harsh as well—though the East Coast Saks employees reserve their strictest disapprobation for their counterparts on the Beverly Hills sales floor.

On a recent slow morning in the Fifth Avenue store, the Ryder case was a popular topic of discussion. "Did you see that video?" one saleswoman asked, referring to the surveillance tape that was a key exhibit in the trial. In it, the diminutive Ryder is seen hauling armloads of clothes around the store. "Where are the salespeople? Why wasn't she being helped? That would never happen here." The Fifth Avenue store has a similar video setup—"It's like a Vegas casino in here," another saleswoman said—but the New York salespeople insist that they handle themselves with more class than their colleagues in California seemed to. "You can't let someone walk around the store with all those clothes," one said. "You don't want to make a scene or make anyone uncomfortable, but they were just asking for trouble." Another Saks employee pointed to the Sensormatic electronic tags affixed to most of the merchandise in the New York store. In the dressing room of the Beverly Hills store, Ryder apparently used a pair of scissors to clip these tags off the things she wanted to steal. "You couldn't cut our tags off with scissors," the employee said. "Our tags are too tough."

No one at Saks could remember a shoplifter offering up a New York version of Ryder's Method-acting defense to the store security officials who caught her. (According to a security guard, she claimed that she was preparing for a role as a kleptomaniac.) But sales associates had other shoplifting tales. "When the men's department was on the first floor, we would have people walk in, grab an armful of ties, and just bolt for the door," one salesman recalled. (Two years ago, menswear moved to six.) Another salesman remembered a shoplifter who stuffed goods in an aluminum-foil-lined shopping bag, in a failed bid to thwart the metal detectors. "Then, there was this very well-dressed Japanese man," one associate said. "We stopped him at the door, and he didn't speak a word of English. Security didn't know what to do with him, so they let him go. He just bowed and left." (Saks officials declined to comment on the Ryder case.)

Even though prosecutors in Los Angeles have said that they won't be seeking jail time for Ryder, she would probably be better off if she had been caught in New York. According to a spokeswoman for the district attorney, in an average month Manhattan prosecutors charge anywhere from five hundred and fifty to six hundred and fifty people with misdemeanors relating to criminal shoplifting. Shortly after their arrests, about sixty-five per cent of these defendants enter plea bargains. "The people who get more than thirty days of jail time tend to be the recidivists, people with ten or twenty convictions," said a veteran prosecutor from the Manhattan district attorney's office. For first offenders like Ryder, felony prosecutions are rare. (Transcripts released after the trial suggest that Ryder had been suspected of shoplifting on other occasions, but she'd never been arrested.) The Los Angeles district attorney's office does not keep specific statistics for shoplifting cases, but in 2001 prosecutors there charged 4,954 people with felony grand theft, and fewer than ten per cent of those cases were plea-bargained down to misdemeanors. In other words, New York is a better place to shoplift.

Students of the case are left to wonder why Ryder, who makes several million dollars a movie and paid for about thirty-seven hundred dollars' worth of merchandise at Saks that day, chose to pilfer, among other things, a seven-hundred-and-sixty-dollar Marc Jacobs thermal undershirt, a five-hundred-and-forty-dollar Natori handbag, and a two-hundred-and-twelve-dollar hair bow. In any case, she doesn't seem to hold anything against Saks. "The strangest thing of all is that after she was arrested she apparently continued to shop at the store," an employee in New York said. "She's sent her personal shopper in on numerous occasions. Clearly, she likes us."



Winona Ryder

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

DEPT. OF PALE IMITATIONS

STILL PUMPED UP

What with the budget crisis, the reappearance of the homeless, and the return of swingers' parties, the city is beginning to resemble its nineteen-seventies self—or so it seemed at the Whitney one night last week, when Arnold Schwarzenegger, Lou Ferrigno, and several hundred guests gathered to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of "Pumping Iron," the documentary about bodybuilding that made "the Austrian Oak" famous and launched a thousand gyms.

Back in early 1976, George Butler, a photographer and documentary filmmaker who had spent months tracking Schwarzenegger, Ferrigno, and several other musclemen as they prepared for the annual Mr. Olympia contest, had run out of cash. Rather than give up on the project, Butler persuaded Palmer Wald, an administrator at the Whitney, to organize an evening of performance art featuring Schwarzenegger and two other bodybuilders. Butler expected a few hundred people to attend the show, which was called "Articulate Muscle: The Male Body in Art," but several thousand turned up, and they overran the museum. "When the night came, there was a blizzard," Butler, who went on to make "Pumping Iron II" and a series of films about the explorer Ernest Shackleton, recalled, as he sat down to dinner in a third-floor gallery. "Suddenly, there was a massive crowd outside. When the elevator doors opened, people would explode out of them. We took in so much money we had to put it in piles on the floor."

Some of the people who attended the show twenty-five years ago were workout enthusiasts, but many, including Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Sam Wagstaff, were not. Prompted by some clever publicity work on Butler's part, the art-world sophisticates had bought the notion that crunching weights and striking poses was a valuable form of self-expression. Vicki Goldberg, a writer for the *Times*, chaired a panel discussion on historic representations of the male form, which took place between the displays of beefcake, and several publications, including this one, carried stories about the evening. A famous photograph in *People* showed an almost naked Schwarzenegger standing on a raised platform, with his stout arms aloft and a mob of gasping society women and cheering men at his feet.

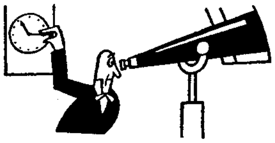
Last week, the atmosphere at the Whitney was more subdued. This was, after all, a publicity event commemorating a publicity event. Things picked up, however, when two human tanks, both stripped to their underpants, made their way through the crowd and clambered onto a makeshift stage, amid pounding dance music. Günter Schlierkamp, a former Mr. Universe, looked like a younger and bigger version of Schwarzenegger. His back was as broad as a redwood; his biceps were so huge that he seemed to be having some difficulty flexing them; his calf muscles were the size of footballs. Ronnie Coleman, a former Dallas cop who has won the Mr. Olympia title five times, was narrower across the shoulders, but only slightly. Both Schlierkamp and Coleman are about six feet tall, but so great is their width that they appear to be much shorter: trolls in size XXXL.

After Schlierkamp and Coleman had finished preening, Ferrigno, who played the Incredible Hulk on TV, got up on the stage. "I feel thin standing next to these guys," he said, before thanking Schwarzenegger and Cinemax, the evening's organizer (which is showing "Pumping Iron" later this month, along with interviews and never-before-seen footage). Schwarzenegger, who had come to the Whitney fully clothed, didn't say anything to the crowd, but earlier he had praised Butler for persevering with "Pumping Iron." "We were operating on the outer fringes of possibility," Butler said. "Before 'Pumping Iron,' bodybuilding was a weird, minor sport, like dwarf tossing. People said I was crazy to want to make a film about those freaks. Now, of course, it's absolutely at the center of the mainstream. Everybody works out with weights."

—*John Cassidy*

AT THE MUSEUMS

KNOW EINSTEIN



"My dear kitten," Albert Einstein wrote, in 1901, to his first wife, the physicist Mileva Maric. "I just read a wonderful paper by Lenard on the generation of cathode rays by ultraviolet light." The romance didn't last. By 1914, Einstein had presented a list of "conditions" under which he could consent to remain in his sour marriage.

"It's the Democratic Party. Do we want to give money to their campaign to find themselves?"

• •

Among them was a demand to have three meals a day delivered to his room. There was also this: "You are neither to expect intimacy nor to reproach me in any way."

By then, Einstein was having an affair with his cousin Elsa Löwenthal, who soon became his second wife (and who, it is often said, remained his second wife by permitting him to "meet" with Betty Neumann, the niece of a friend, twice a week for nearly a decade). The divorce from Mileva was bitter, but it generated one of the more unusual legal agreements in the history of science: Einstein assumed that he would eventually win the Nobel Prize, so he instructed his lawyers to make the money part of the divorce settlement.

Visitors to the Einstein exhibit that opened last week at the American Museum of Natural History may be inclined to skip lightly over the panels dedicated to his complicated personal life, but it is strangely comforting to see that the man who created the modern world was so frequently befuddled by it. His relationships often failed. He fled one country and lived uneasily in another. He hated totalitarianism but was opposed to capitalism. He barely knew his sons.

Einstein's thoughts are often portrayed as too complex for mortals to master. That turns out to be untrue. In the exhibit, the curator, Michael Shara, explains how light travels, why time warps, what makes stars shine. Walk in the door and you are immediately greeted with a view of yourself as seen through a black hole. (It is not a pretty sight.) Shara had access to the collection of Einstein's papers at Hebrew University, and he has made exquisite use of them. "Everything you have ever thought about space and time is wrong," he says. "Absolutely wrong." Shara never cheats on the science, but, because many of us are at least a tiny bit afraid of physics, he and the graphics team, led by Stephanie Reyer, have provided a series of interactive aides to penetrate the complexity of Einstein's world. For instance, they present some amusing scenarios to illustrate Einstein's discovery that the faster you travel the slower time passes: the cosmonaut Sergei Avdeyev spent more than two years on the Russian space station Mir; Mir was moving faster than the earth, so Avdeyev is two-hundredths of a second younger than he would be if he'd never been in space. (The exhibit makes it clear that much faster trips, say, at nearly the speed of light, produce rather more dramatic results.)

Shara doesn't simply explain what $E=mc^2$ means; he demonstrates that, under the right conditions, the mass of a single penny could be converted into enough energy to fuel New York City for two years. He also notes that the temperatures required for such a procedure would be well in excess of those found inside the sun. So, for the moment, we are stuck with Con Ed.

In 1905, at the age of twenty-six, Einstein published four papers that provided the blueprint for much of the modern experience. Pages from those papers are displayed together. It is still hard to believe that Einstein's work in that single year led to the discovery of, among other things, X-ray crystallography, DNA, the photoelectric effect, vacuum tubes, transistors, and the mechanics of the information age. Unfortunately, it also laid the groundwork for the atomic bomb.

The bomb hovers over the exhibit as it has over life itself since the Second World War. The most chilling exchange of letters is one between Einstein and Franklin D. Roosevelt—never before displayed together—in which Einstein informed the President that the Germans were on the verge of creating an atomic weapon. He urged Roosevelt to get there first. "Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future," Einstein wrote. His letter led to the Manhattan Project, and in later years he often wondered whether he'd made a mistake writing it and what might have happened if he had not. When the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Einstein's immediate response was "*Vey iz mir*," and Shara presents the phrase, under a picture of the mushroom cloud, with the translation: "Woe is me." By the end of his life, Einstein was a pacifist, his creations having slipped well beyond his control.

—*Michael Specter*

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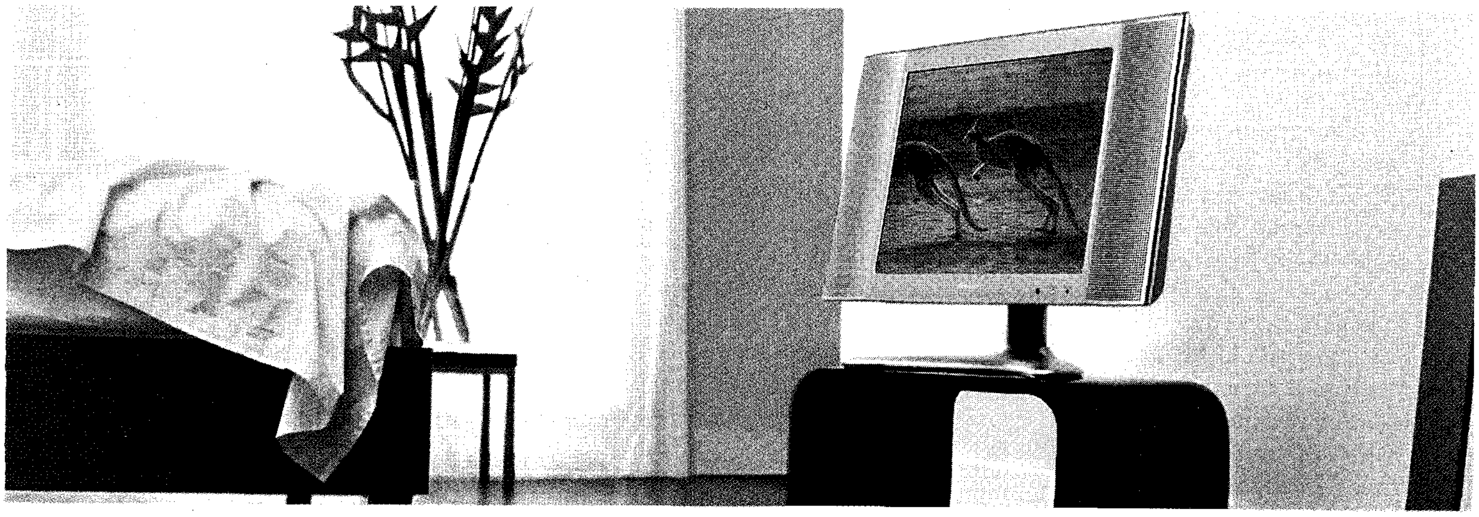

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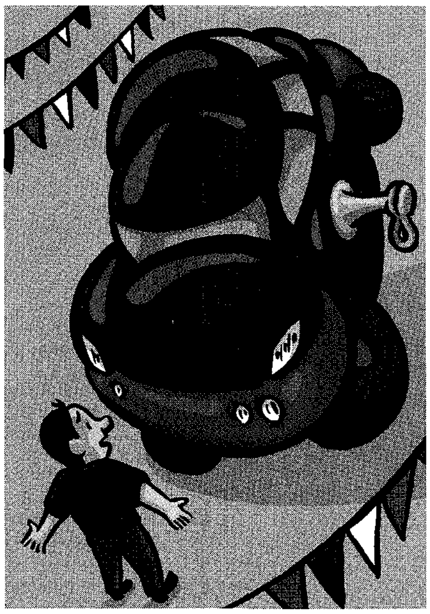
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE MOTOR CITY MIRAGE

In January, 1994, Detroit turned its annual auto show into a giant coming-out party for the American automobile industry, a kind of Crystal Palace Exhibition for the Big Three. The previous decade and a half had been dismal for Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors; at times it had looked as though they might not survive. But by improving quality and design, and by taking hold of the new market for minivans and S.U.V.s, they had rebounded. The 1994 auto show was meant to demonstrate how far they'd come. With great fanfare, Chrysler unveiled the Dodge Stratus, a stylish four-door sedan, which, along with a higher-priced sibling, the Cirrus (there was, alas, no Cumulus), was Detroit's latest answer to the little juggernauts from Japan, the Toyota Camry and the Honda Accord.

So many show ponies turn out to be mules. The Stratus, in its early years, had twice as many defects, per car, as the Accord, and it is still an also-ran, with barely a fourth of the sales of its Japanese rivals. It was not the only American laggard. Since 1994, the Big Three's share of the passenger-car market has dropped from sixty-four per cent to forty-seven per cent. Detroit now loses money on most of the cars it makes. Foreign cars routinely dominate annual ten-best lists and have a much better resale value. They get stolen more often. And they're profitable, too.

Throughout the nineties, none of this seemed to matter, because Detroit had a silver bullet—the S.U.V. For every underwhelming Sunfire or Monte Carlo, there was an Explorer or a Grand Cherokee. The Big Three's profits on S.U.V.s and light trucks dwarfed their losses on cars. In 1999, G.M., Ford, and Chrysler earned a combined nineteen billion dollars. But then it all fell apart again. Chrysler lost two billion dollars in the second half of 2000 and two billion more in 2001. Ford lost $5.5 billion last year. G.M. is eking out small profits. It's as if the nineties had never happened.

Many have laid the blame for this collapse on the usual bogeys: a strong dollar, high pension costs, weak marketing. But the Big Three might also blame the very thing that supposedly saved them: the S.U.V. Many Detroit executives knew that the problems of the eighties had not been fixed. Their engineering and design processes were still bureaucratic and inefficient. Their relationships with suppliers were antagonistic. And though their factories are certainly more efficient than they used to be, they've still got nothing on the Japanese (many of whose factories are now in the U.S., of course): it takes Nissan and Honda thirty-one hours to build a car; at Ford, it takes forty-one. But the S.U.V. boom made these problems look much less urgent. Significant restructuring—shutting plants, eliminating brands, shaking up corporate hierarchies—seemed not just arduous but unnecessary. "It's easier to ride a hot hand than to fix the business," James Womack, the auto-industry expert, says. In a way, the S.U.V. recalls the compact disk. When people replaced their old records with CDs, the windfall tricked record companies into believing that they had finally mastered the art of turning out hits. The easy money didn't last.



Perhaps none of this would be cause for concern if Detroit's control over the S.U.V. market were absolute. But foreign automakers are finally building good S.U.V.s of their own, and stealing market share, forcing Detroit to offer incentives that erode its margins. Industry analysts have predicted that in a couple of years profits on domestic S.U.V.s will be cut in half.

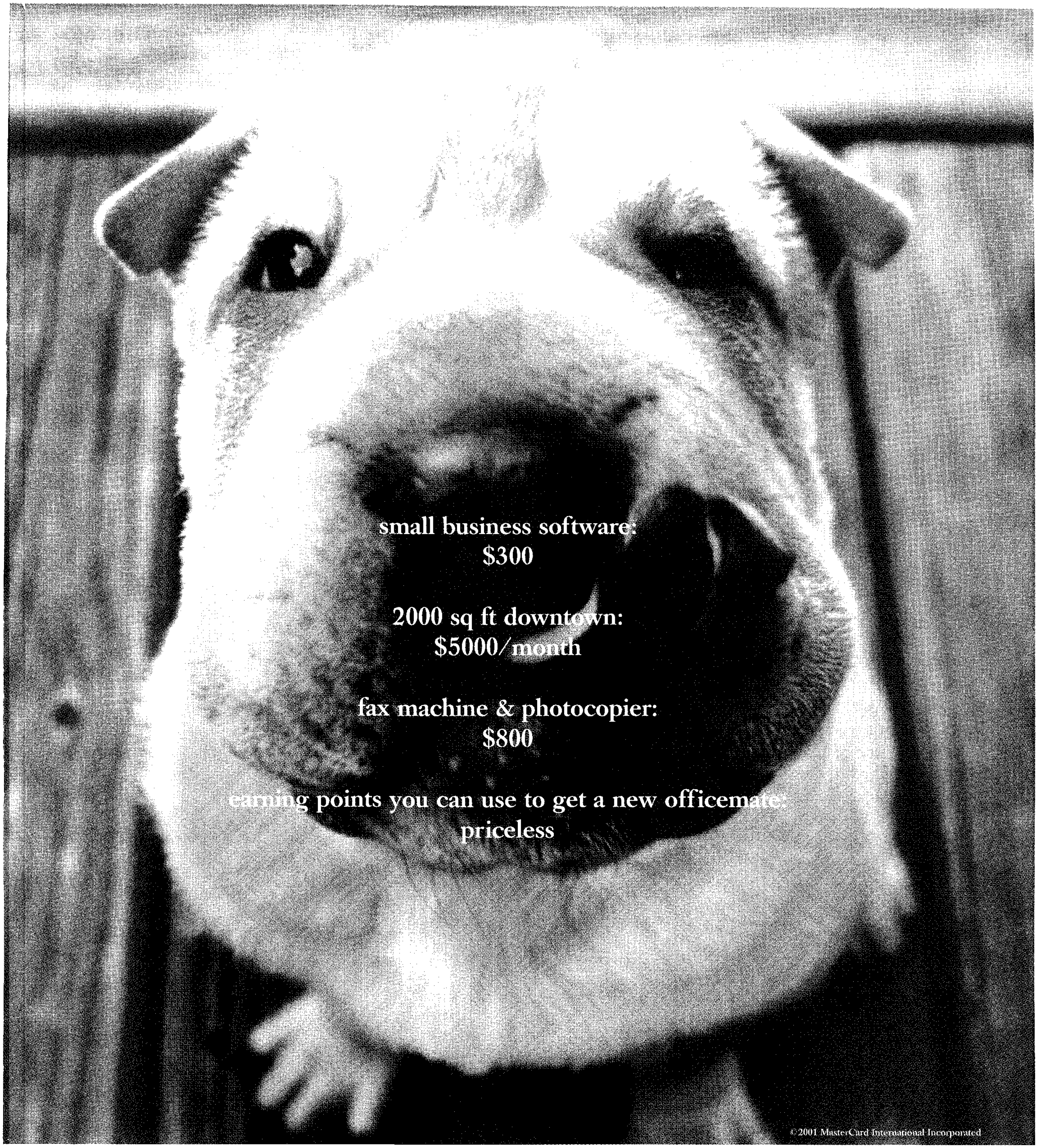
The Big Three (now the Big Two and a Half, since Daimler bought Chrysler) aren't procrastinating any longer. Turnaround efforts have begun in earnest—G.M., for instance, is phasing out Oldsmobile and revitalizing Cadillac—but they are complicated by the fact that Detroit remains in thrall to the old G.M. slogan "A car for every purse and purpose." In most businesses, if you make millions of products at a loss you eventually stop making them. (At G.E., even profitable product lines are discontinued if they aren't profitable enough.) But U.S. automakers still seem to think that success is a factor of size, and that a car company must build every kind of vehicle imaginable, no matter the cost.

Even when automakers want to change, they often find it difficult to do so. They run smack into what economists call "high barriers to exit." Usually, companies face "barriers to entry," meaning that it is hard to get into a given business, but for Detroit it's the getting out that's hard. G.E. may have a free hand to stop making light bulbs and home appliances (which, believe it or not, it is now considering), but if the people in charge at the Big Three were to kill the Mercury Cougar or the Pontiac Bonneville they'd have to put up with union protests, visits from congressmen, and lamentations in the press about the disappearance of another American icon. Figuring out the right strategy is one thing. Persuading all these different constituencies to let you implement it is another.

This is not the first boom-and-bust cycle that has afflicted American automakers, and they do always seem to turn things around. The problem is that, with each cycle, they wind up further behind than they were before. At the 1994 auto show, Jack Smith—then the C.E.O. of G.M.—said in a speech, "Success itself breeds the roots of complacency, myopia, and, ultimately, decline." Smith thought that he was talking about Detroit's past. Little did he know that he was also predicting its future.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

THE CALCULATOR

How Kenneth Feinberg determines the value of three thousand lives.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

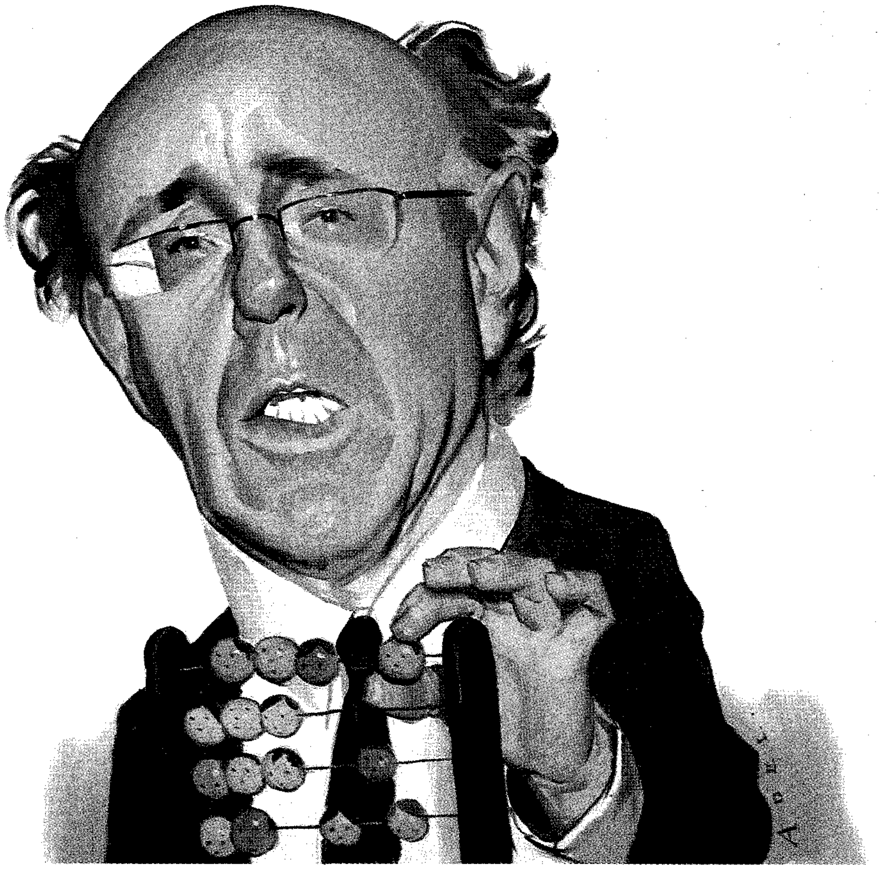
A little more than a year after September 11th, Kenneth Feinberg, who holds the title of special master of the Victim Compensation Fund, met with a group of firefighters in his midtown office. Feinberg, who is fifty-seven, has a long face, a prominent forehead, and an abrupt manner. Standing, he appears to be straining forward, and even when he is sitting down he leans in, as if about to get up again. That morning, Feinberg had taken off his jacket, and he greeted the firefighters in his shirtsleeves. His gold cufflinks—a gift to himself—were embossed with the scales of justice.

The first of the men to speak was a burly firefighter with a ruddy complexion. He had spent four weeks at the World Trade Center site, initially trying to rescue victims and then to recover remains. He told Feinberg that whatever he had breathed in during that time—pulverized glass, concrete, lead, traces of asbestos; "I call it a bunch of crap," he said—had reduced his lung capacity by more than fifty per cent. He coughed throughout the session.

"Sleeping's tough," he said. "When I'm getting depressed, my wife calls it 'the mood.' She takes the kids out." The fireman told Feinberg that he had recently had to quit the F.D.N.Y. and had taken a job monitoring security cameras at a school. "I can't play street hockey, can't play ball—my son, he can't understand why Daddy can't do nothing.

"This is what I take every day," he announced, holding up a freezer bag filled with medications. "There's a bunch of pills, there's nasal sprays, there's steroids, there's inhalers." He extracted some more medicines from a fanny pack. "This is what I keep on me all the time: albuterol, epinephrine—it's a self-stick. If it gets really bad, I've got to hit this and go to the hospital."

Eventually, a second firefighter—a slight man who sat slumped in his chair—spoke up. He explained that he had spent the afternoon of the attack sifting through the ruins of the World Trade Center concourse. "We were trying to dig this person out of the dirt and the debris and the dust and the smoke. You saw the astronauts on the moon, that dust surface? That was what was coming into your face. Three weeks later, I was coughing up blood, dirt, debris. Since then, I've been in the hospital three times. It's affecting my liver, my pancreas, my stomach, and nobody can really give me a definite answer why. My eleven-year-old son, he asks his mother, 'Is Daddy going to die now?' "



For Feinberg, the word "Machiavellian," which he uses about himself, is not a pejorative.

DANIEL ADEL

The Victim Compensation Fund, or V.C.F., as it is known, expires a year from next month. Between now and then, it is expected to issue checks to some three thousand families. The fund is the first of its kind, and, to the extent that it has a logic, Feinberg, as special master, has imposed it. It is Feinberg who drafted the rules for disbursing the fund, Feinberg who is determining how the rules are administered, and Feinberg who will hear appeals from people unhappy with the way the rules have been applied. In the case of victims like the firefighters, whose ailments did not manifest themselves until days, or even weeks, after the disaster, Feinberg has the authority to decide not just how much compensation they will receive but whether they will get any at all. By most estimates, the bill for the fund will eventually run to five billion dollars, though it is possible that it could be a good deal higher. How much higher is, once again, entirely up to Feinberg, who has been granted what amounts to a blank check on the federal Treasury.

Anyone in Feinberg's position would have found himself at odds with some of the victims' families; Feinberg has managed to infuriate just about all of them.

"I've heard you say that you couldn't put yourselves in our shoes," a widow told him publicly a few months ago. "I think if you could feel our pain for one hour your tone and your mannerisms would be so drastically different than what they are." At the same meeting, a man who had lost his wife and niece said, "You have an arrogance about you that is so painful, you can't possibly believe." Feinberg, who is a lawyer by training, has spent most of his adult life immersed in disaster, and during that time has priced almost every imaginable form of human suffering, from birth defects and infertility to asbestosis and death. If the anger upsets him, he doesn't show it. "Everybody rants and raves," he told me.

The day Feinberg met with the firefighters, he listened, apparently unmoved. While they related their symptoms and fears, he jiggled his knee. He consumed two Halloween-size packages of Necco wafers, then stuffed the wrappers into a plastic cup. When the men were done, they asked him if he had any questions. He shook his head and showed them to the door.

Congress created the Victim Compensation Fund just ten days after September 11th. During the hurried negotiations, several candidates to manage it had been mentioned, including John Danforth, the former senator from Missouri, and George Mitchell, the former senator from Maine. Feinberg took a look at the legislation and decided, as he put it to me, "I've been trained for the last twenty years to do this." He rang up Senator Chuck Hagel, of Nebraska, an old friend of his. "The minute I called, he said, 'I know why you're calling,' " Feinberg told me. " 'You're the man.' And he took it from there."

Feinberg grew up in Brockton, Massachusetts, where his father sold tires, and he still speaks—usually emphatically—in an unreconstructed Boston accent. As a kid, he performed in amateur theatricals, and even considered becoming an actor, but after attending the University of Massachusetts he decided, on the advice of his father, to go to N.Y.U. Law School instead. Feinberg clerked for the then chief judge of New York, Stanley Fuld, and later served as Edward Kennedy's chief of staff. He now lives in Bethesda, Maryland—he and his wife, Diane, have three grown children—in a house with a specially designed sound room where he keeps six thousand classical-music CDs. Before September 11th, he routinely got up at 5 A.M.; these days, he is often awake at three. He is in the office by six.

Oddly enough, Feinberg arrived at his current specialty in large part thanks to a talent for burlesque. In the early nineteen-seventies, at a birthday party for Fuld, Feinberg delivered a roast that impressed Judge Jack Weinstein, of the federal district court in Brooklyn. Weinstein and Feinberg became friendly, and a decade later, when Weinstein took over the Agent Orange case, he asked Feinberg if he would try to persuade the two sides to settle, so that the case wouldn't have to go to trial.

At the point that Weinstein brought Feinberg into it, the Agent Orange case was in its eighth year. It pitted hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans who had been exposed to the defoliant, and who had contracted diseases ranging from skin ailments to abdominal cancer, against the federal government and the herbicide's manufacturers, including Dow and Monsanto. Virtually no one on either side believed that an agreement could be reached. Nevertheless, Feinberg threw himself into the project, producing an eighty-page proposal in a few weeks. Both sides rejected it. They remained separated by a host of issues, most significantly money—the veterans were demanding a billion dollars, while the chemical companies refused to pay more than a few hundred thousand—and it appeared that a trial could not be avoided. At 3 A.M. on the day that jury selection was set to begin, they finally settled.

"Ken revealed himself as a superb negotiator," Judge Weinstein, who is eighty-one and still serving on the bench, told me. "He was very tough. He understood the case completely, better than either side's lawyers." The night the settlement was reached—the sum ultimately agreed upon was a hundred and eighty million dollars—Weinstein had taken a hotel room in Manhattan, and, just before dawn, he informed Feinberg that he could announce the deal. Weinstein recalls him bouncing on the bed: "He was very excited."

The Agent Orange case was precedent setting. It greatly expanded the pos-

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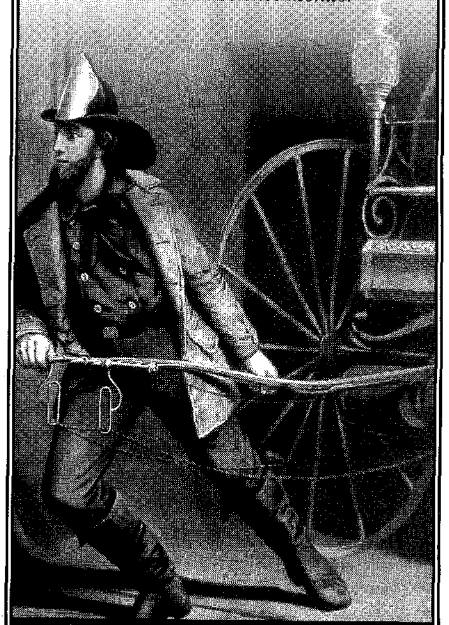

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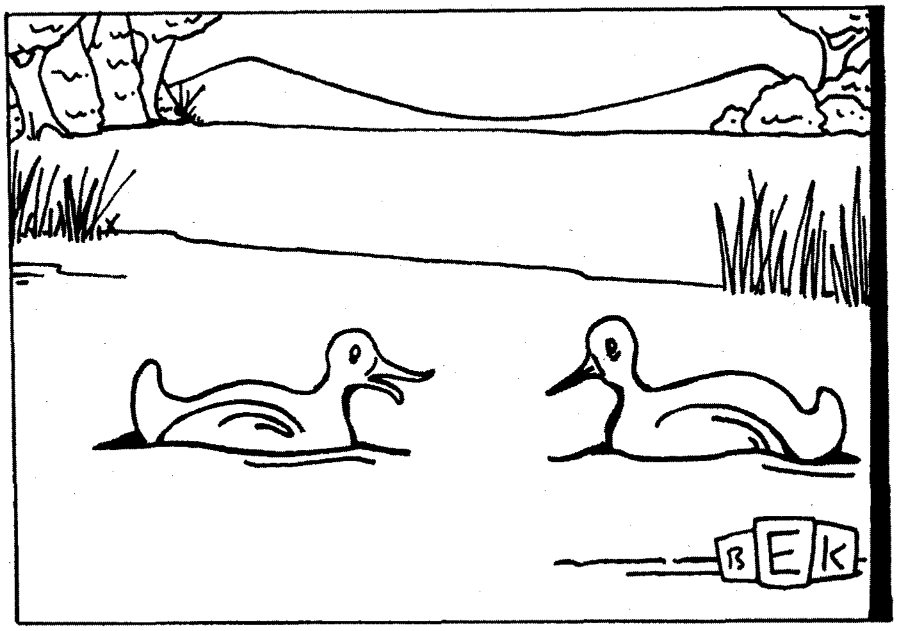
sibilities of class-action lawsuits—some would argue disastrously so—and it was followed by a string of other so-called mass-tort cases. Rare was the large, high-profile settlement that Feinberg was not involved in. He was the special master in the DES case, which had a thousand plaintiffs, and he played a similar role in the case of the Dalkon Shield I.U.D., which had two hundred and fifty thousand. Feinberg served as the negotiator for Dow Corning when it was sued by four hundred and fifty thousand women over breast implants, and successfully negotiated the resolution to hundreds of asbestos cases. In the process, he earned a reputation of being highly effective and unusually abrasive.

"He had a style which conveyed a great sense of displeasure at your stubbornness or lack of understanding," Judith Vladeck, an attorney who represented Long Island Lighting Company ratepayers in another case that Feinberg mediated, told me. "It wasn't 'I don't agree with you.' It was 'What's wrong with you, how dumb can you be?' There was a firmness which I can appreciate now, but which I didn't enjoy being a victim of." In 1993, Feinberg left the law firm of Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Handler, where he had been a partner, and formed his own firm, the Feinberg Group, with offices in New York and Washington.

Over the years, Feinberg has worked out a method for dealing with sprawling, complex cases, the key element of which he describes as stripping away the complexities. Under this method, individual circumstances are reduced to numbers, so that the whole settlement can be expressed in a set of tables. "The way you divvy up the money is to come up, to the extent you can, with an objective allocation formula," Feinberg told me. He offered the Dalkon Shield case as an example: "We had a matrix—here's what you get. A hysterectomy's worth this, pelvic inflammation's worth this, cervical cancer's worth this, migraine headaches are worth this. Demonstrate medically you've had any of this, and we'll pay you."

Numerically speaking, September 11th is much less daunting than most of the other cases Feinberg has been called upon to settle. "I mean, thirty-three hundred dead and injured is almost quantitatively not a mass tort," he observed. But the rawness of the emotion is something that Feinberg acknowledges he has never before experienced. "I made a very wise decision when I took this job," he told me. "I'm doing this for nothing. I love it when senators or congressmen come up to me and go, 'Ken, what a sacrifice that you're doing this for nothing, in the public interest, that's fabulous,' when of course the real reason I did it in the public interest— It *is* fabulous, if I do say so,



"Maybe you should ask yourself why you're inviting all this duck hunting into your life right now."

it *is* a sacrifice. But, as a Machiavellian matter, can you imagine if these families knew I was getting paid for this, on the blood and bodies of the dead? 'You're only giving me three million, what did you make?' As a Machiavellian matter, I just completely undercut that whole line of criticism by telling people, 'I'm not getting paid for this, you know.' "

During the past year, Feinberg has held several dozen question-and-answer sessions with victims' families, mostly in the New York area but also in Boston, Washington, and Los Angeles. At these sessions, Feinberg explains the workings of the fund and listens to families' concerns, a process that often involves taking a good deal of abuse. On a recent sleety night, I drove out with him and his oldest son, Michael, to a session he was holding on Staten Island. Feinberg had already been out to Staten Island twice; the first time, a man had made what Feinberg, who is Jewish, considered to be an anti-Semitic remark. Michael, an N.Y.U. law student, was accompanying him to the third session to lend moral support.

"Staten Island, that's a Third World country," Feinberg told me, more than once, on the drive out. The meeting, at the Staten Island Hilton, was set for seven o'clock, and Feinberg hadn't had dinner, so before heading into the session he stopped at the hotel gift shop to buy a package of Chuckles for himself and a Snickers bar for Michael. In the lobby, he ran into several people he knew—there are some family members who follow him around from session to session—and he greeted them with wry heartiness. I sat down next to two men, both of whom had lost sons who were firefighters.

"You'll hear it said many times here that people don't care about the money, and it's true, we don't," one of them told me. "But somehow the higher the amount, the more value then put on your loved one's life, the more meaning it has. So I would like them to say we all get a trillion dollars, just so I know my son was worth a trillion dollars, not that I would ever want it."

"That's right," the other man said. "You can't put a value on your son's life, but then they come out with these astronomical figures, and—well, you're not going to get that because of this, that,

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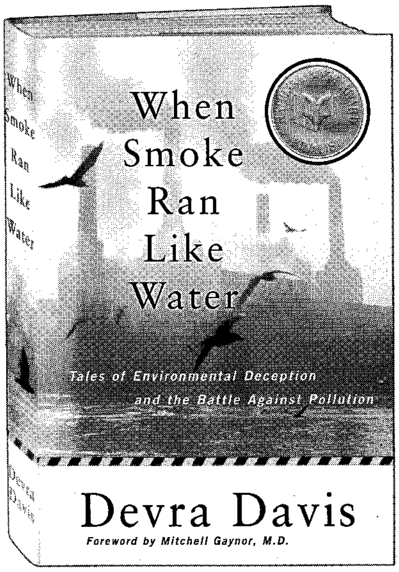
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and the other reason. They kind of promise you something, but they don't deliver." A lot of families, the man added, "feel that this program is just a coverup to bail out the airlines, to bail out the Port Authority, to bail out New York City. It's for them, it's not really for us."

The Victim Compensation Fund was in fact created not for the victims' sake but for the airlines', and, more specifically, for protecting the airlines *from* the victims. In the days after September 11th, the country's major carriers were facing not just billions of dollars in immediate losses but tens of billions of dollars in potential legal claims, and lawmakers were worried that the nation's entire transportation system could collapse. They responded with the Air Transportation Safety and System Stabilization Act, which granted the carriers five billion dollars in cash and ten billion in loan guarantees. The act also limited the airlines' liability for the disaster to the amount of insurance that had been carried by the four hijacked flights. (This is generally believed to be a total of six billion dollars.) It was in a subsection of the bill that Congress created the V.C.F. Families who accept the payments from the fund relinquish the right to sue the airlines, the Port Authority, which owned the World Trade Center, and any other domestic entity; in return, they are supposed to receive from the government compensation for their pain and suffering and for their economic losses.

At the Staten Island meeting, the first few questions put to Feinberg were technical ones. Under the law, payments from the V.C.F. are supposed to be reduced by the amount of compensation that families have received from other sources, and one woman wanted to know whether a certain type of death benefit would count as an offset. (Feinberg has defined offsets to include life insurance and Social Security, but not the sums—in many cases, considerable—that families received from charity.) A man asked who should file a claim with the fund in the case of a family whose members were feuding.

Soon, however, the tenor of the questions shifted. A woman stood up at the microphone, holding a large photograph. "I'm the parent of a single firefighter," she said. "This is my son. Before he became a probationary firefighter, he served his country for five years in the United States Marine Corps, making sub-poverty-level wages. He then joined the Fire Department as a probationary firefighter and he graduated to making poverty-level wages. I would like to know why someone in his category is really being discriminated against regarding what you and the Victim Compensation Fund consider his life was worth?"

A few minutes later, a second woman, who had lost her sister, declared, "I just want to say that it's really a disgrace that a year and some months after the tragedy happened we're still all fighting." Addressing herself to Feinberg, she went on, "We've suffered enough. Why are you making our lives even more complicated? Make something easy, make everyone happy. I know you're all about the numbers, and the statute, and the regulations, and this computation, and this deduction, and 'This doesn't count,' and 'Please come to me and make your plea to me.' We don't need to make a plea. We're not begging for money. We want our people back."

Feinberg told the woman he could not bring people back, and he could not make them happy.

"Yes, you can," she insisted.

"No, I can't," he repeated. "I can't make you happy."

"But your children are alive and breathing, right?" someone called out.

"Thank God," Feinberg said, casting a glance in Michael's direction.

"Explanation of Process for Computing Presumed Economic Loss" is one of a series of papers that Feinberg has posted on the V.C.F. Web site. In it, he provides the formula that he will be using for compensating families, as well as an explanation of the assumptions underlying it. Much of the document is abstruse—at points, it seems, even deliberately so. At the end, however, Feinberg, in keeping with his usual practice, resolves these complexities into a set of tables. Using them, anyone can plug in a few basic facts about a victim—his or her age, income, and number of children—and derive an estimate of what the fund can be expected to offer the family.

At first glance, the tables defy most notions of equity; the more needs a family is likely to have, the less well it fares. For example, the tables show that the widow of a twenty-five-year-old who had no children and was earning a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a year can anticipate a payment, before any offsets, of nearly four and a half million dollars. The widow of a man who was earning the same salary and was similarly childless but was forty can expect half that amount, while the widow of a forty-year-old who was making fifty thousand dollars and had one child can expect a quarter of it. Finally, the widow of a forty-year-old with two dependent children who was making twenty thousand dollars does worst of all. She can expect about a fifth, or slightly more than nine hundred thousand dollars.

When Feinberg is questioned about these sorts of inequities, he responds, invariably, that his hands are tied. "What you're really asking is: All lives are equal, why isn't everybody getting the same amount of money?" he told the mother with the photograph on Staten Island. "A very fair question, ladies and gentlemen. The answer is: Congress told me that is not the way to compute these awards. Congress said you must take into account the economic loss suffered by the victim's death." This claim is a useful one for Feinberg, and, up to a point, also accurate.

Aside from the inequities, what is most striking about Feinberg's tables is that a lot of numbers are missing. In those rows where the economic losses would be the greatest—low age crossed with high salary—instead of posting numbers Feinberg has put rows of "X"s. Moreover, he has declined to publish any figures at all for victims who earned more than two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a year.

It is unclear exactly how many victims Feinberg has left off his tables, but because the World Trade Center housed several large financial firms, where relatively young men and women routinely earned hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, the number is almost certainly a high one. Following a strict economic-loss calculation, some of these victims' families would be entitled to payments of ten, twenty, and, in a few cases, even thirty million dollars from the government. This, apparently, is what lawmakers mandated when they created the V.C.F., but it is not, it seems clear, what they—or just about anybody else—actually want to see happen now. Feinberg noted to me that both Senator Kennedy, a Democrat, and Senator Hagel, a Republican, had offered him the same advice on this point, which he summed up as "Don't let twenty per cent of the people get eighty per cent of the money." Exactly how Feinberg intends to treat what he calls the "high-end" families is not known—he keeps putting off resolving this issue—but he has indicated that, except in extremely rare cases, he is not going to give out awards of more than six million dollars.

Not surprisingly, Feinberg's position has infuriated the families of the most highly paid victims, who accuse him of acting arbitrarily, unfairly, and, finally, illegally. One day, I was sitting in Feinberg's office when a man whose wife had earned nearly four hundred thousand dollars a year came in to appeal his award. After several million dollars in offsets because of a life-insurance policy, the man was set to receive two million dollars. He felt he deserved at least another million. Feinberg asked the man whether he thought payments ought to be made solely on the basis of income, even if this meant that some already affluent families would receive ten million dollars in taxpayer money.

"Yes, absolutely," the man responded. "The idea is to compensate me so my life style doesn't change, and my life style is different from a guy washing dishes. I don't live in a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-month apartment. I live in a place that costs me five thousand dollars a month in mortgage payments."

Cantor Fitzgerald, the bond-trading firm that lost six hundred and fifty-eight people in the attack, has issued an eighty-page critique of Feinberg's handling of the fund, which notes that Congress instructed him "to determine economic loss—not to make value judgments about different groups of income earners." Stephen Merkel, the firm's general counsel, told me that Feinberg had sought "the power to make awards on whatever basis he feels like" and that his actions demonstrated "a complete disregard for the law itself." When confronted with criticism of this sort, Feinberg offers precisely the opposite defense from the

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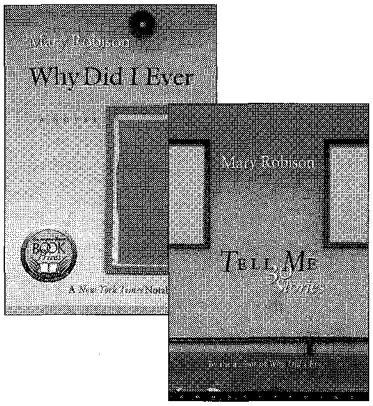

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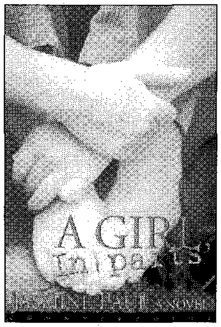

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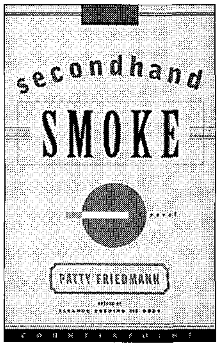

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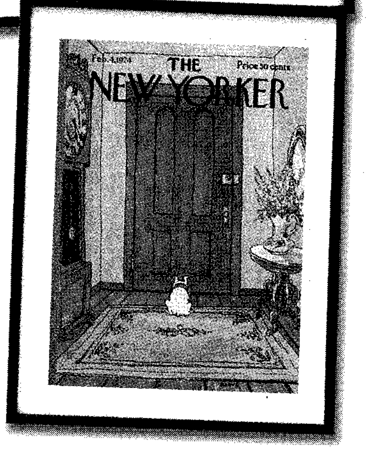

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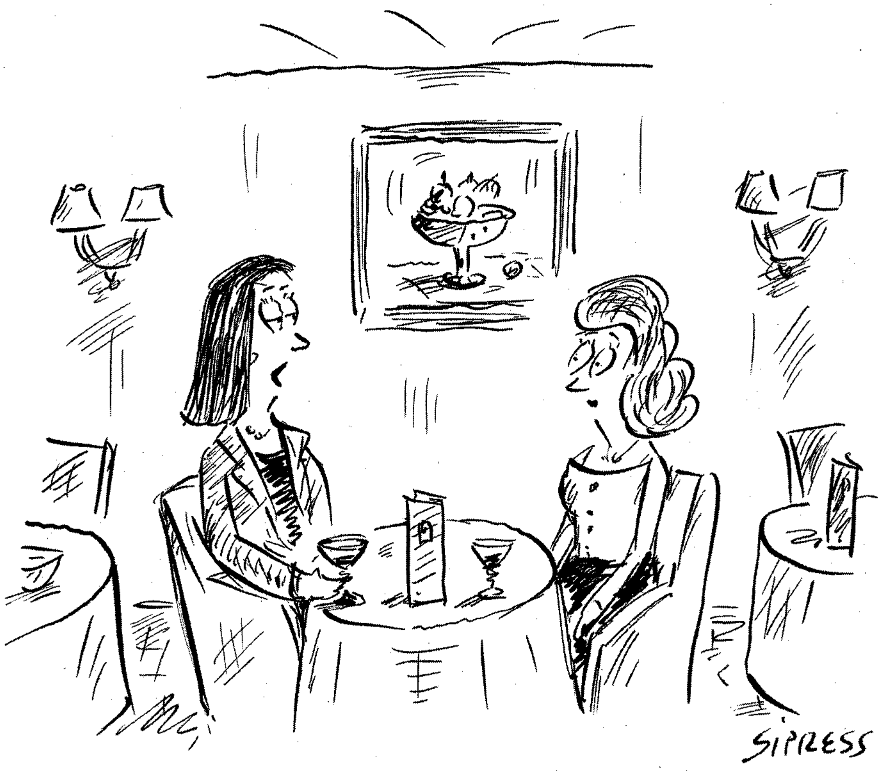

"I've had one great passion in my life—hating my job."

• •

one he gave the mother on Staten Island.

"The law gives me unbelievable discretion," he says. "It gives me discretion to do whatever I want. So I will."

Perhaps because of this discretion, a number of conspiracy theories swirl around Feinberg: that he has cut a nefarious deal with the Bush Administration, that he is secretly taking orders from Attorney General John Ashcroft, that—and this is really a subset of the first two—he is using the Victim Compensation Fund to advance the cause of tort reform. Although Feinberg is an outspoken, Teddy Kennedy-style Democrat, he was appointed special master by Ashcroft, a conservative Republican, who also—theoretically, at least—has the power to un-appoint him. At every opportunity, Feinberg praises Ashcroft, calling him his "No. 1 ally." When I asked him how he and the Attorney General had managed to bridge their not inconsiderable political differences, he smiled and said, "It's either a tribute to bipartisanship or very Machiavellian, or a little bit of both."

Feinberg uses the word "Machiavellian" to refer to his own actions surprisingly often. The first time I heard him do so, I was puzzled; by the third or fourth time, I realized that he didn't mean it as self-criticism. During the weeks that I followed Feinberg around, I attended half a dozen meetings at his conference table, at which a total of about thirty cases were discussed. Feinberg was by turns gentle and hostile, confiding and withholding, depending on what seemed most efficacious. With awards below the average—currently about $1.5 million—he was almost always willing to add a few hundred thousand; on one occasion, I heard him promise to give a widow an additional half million dollars for no other reason than that she had come in with her two small children and asked for it. As far as I could make it out, Feinberg's reasoning in these cases amounted to: Let's do what seems to work, and worry about how to justify it afterward. With awards in the very upper reaches, by contrast, he was staunchly, even theatrically, recalcitrant. One lawyer told Feinberg that he had calculated the proper payment for his client to be between sixteen and seventeen million dollars.

"You've lost your fucking mind!" Feinberg exclaimed. "This guy should file a suit."

"He might—you're giving him every

reason to," the lawyer replied, calmly.

"I want him to!" Feinberg said. "And do me a favor—hold a press conference. Say I wouldn't give the guy sixteen million dollars—tax free!"

So far, only about eight hundred families, or a quarter of those eligible, have submitted claims to the fund, a proportion that is lower than Feinberg would like, but one that he maintains he is not, at this point, particularly concerned about. Feinberg's stated goal is to have ninety per cent of the families accept payment from the fund, and so relinquish the right to sue the airlines, the Port Authority, or the City of New York. Accepting the payment doesn't necessarily mean being happy with it, or even feeling that it is fair; it just means recognizing that it is better than the alternative, which is years of litigation and a high risk of getting nothing. "Who's going to fight?" Feinberg told me. "No one's going to fight."

One evening after a series of meetings with victims' families, I stayed behind to talk to Feinberg. We sat in the empty conference room, which offered a view of several lanes of rush-hour traffic and a sliver of the East River. I asked him for his own views on the fund and whether it was structured fairly. Was it right for some families to receive huge payments while others, who needed help much more, received comparatively little? This was, he said, an "interesting and debatable" question, but by no means the most difficult one, which, in his opinion, was whether the fund should exist at all.

"I'll show you e-mails from people that'll break your heart," he told me. " 'Dear Mr. Feinberg, my son died in Oklahoma City. Why not me?' 'Dear Mr. Feinberg, my son died in the first World Trade Center bombing, in '93, why not me?' Anthrax—why not me? African Embassy bombing—why not me? U.S.S. Cole—why not me? And then you get even beyond terrorism. 'My husband died last year saving three little girls in a Mississippi flood—why not him?' " If there was an essential distinction between September 11th and these other tragedies, Feinberg didn't offer it. "Where do you stop?" he asked. We talked for a while longer, and then Feinberg told me, politely but firmly, that he had to leave. He was meeting Michael, and they were going to the opera. ♦

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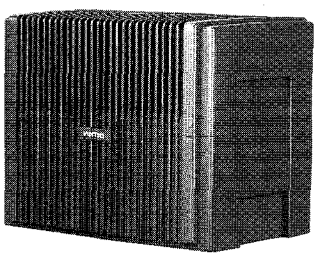

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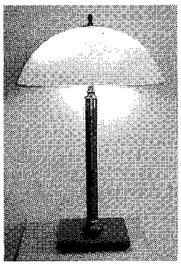

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

HEPATITIS F

BY PRUDENCE CROWTHER

A man who underwent 13 laser surgeries to have a misspelled tattoo removed from his shoulder has settled a lawsuit against the shop where he got it, his lawyer said. . . . [The tattoo showed] a knife stabbing into a man's back, with the words "Why Not, Everyone Else Does." The word "Else" was spelled "Elese." —*The Times.*

AFFIDAVIT

Joey Barstow, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

I am over the age of eighteen and work as a proofreader for Tats & Ass, at 236 Gladstone Avenue, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I have been in the business since 1974 and have worked in other parlors, including Not Just Mom, in Paterson, and Inkstain Retch, in Union City. I learned proofreading at *Modern Fumigator*, published in Camden, where I read ad copy, and at St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic, where I used to check register marks in radiology.

On the morning of August 9, 1999, the tattooist handed me the stencil with the lettering the client wanted on his shoulder. In my defense, I should say by then I could hardly see straight, on account of we'd been up all night working on a biker wedding. At the last minute, the bridesmaids, if that's what they call them, suddenly got this idea they would get wraparound ankle tattoos with the date and the interstate-highway number of the ceremony, and my eyes were falling on the floor.

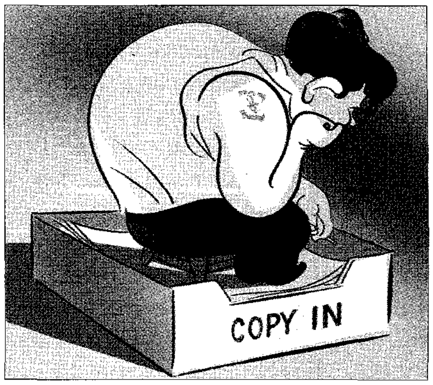
Anyway, the transfer said:

WHY NOT,
EVERYONE ELESE DOES

They didn't show me the picture of the back-stabbing. Obviously, that would have tipped me off; you should always look at the art. But, like I said, I was wiped out and didn't think to check.

You have to understand, this type of clientele has their own style, their own rules. If they want to say "GOD COULDN'T B EVERYWHERE SO HE MADE BUDWEISER" on their rear ends, you don't fix it, you don't spell it out. So I looked at the paper, and without the art I figured "Elese" was the client's way of spelling Elise, his old lady, the way they will spell Porsche "Portia," or whatever. It's not like I just read over it. In fact, I asked the client if instead he meant maybe "ELESE DOES EVERYONE—AND WHY NOT?" or something. I mean, this isn't Princeton.

Of course, that wasn't what the customer wanted, so Bobby—he's the artist—went ahead with the original. And when the swelling went down and the redness went away, the guy came back ballistic as a hornet. I was crashing in the back on the electrolysis couch—someone's back-hair appointment had been cancelled—when they woke me up. In the old days, you would just tattoo in the delete-and-close-up sign:



ELESE

It's a look, and people used to understand that. You still even see "stet" on an old biceps once in a while. Now, never. Anyhow, I tried to sell the guy on fixing it, but he was too mad, and if it's anyone's fault I guess it would be mine. Like I say, though, I was under pressure.

Further deponent sayeth not. ♦

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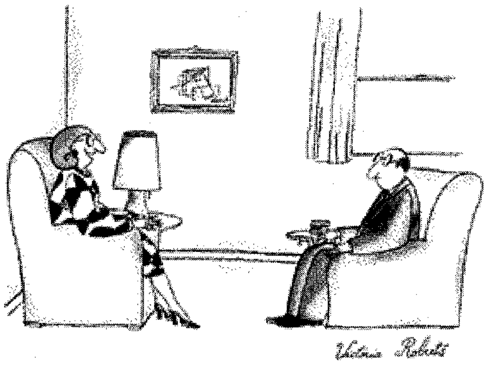

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THE SPORTING SCENE

KISS KISS, BANG BANG

Barry Bonds wasn't quite the whole story in the World Series.

BY ROGER ANGELL

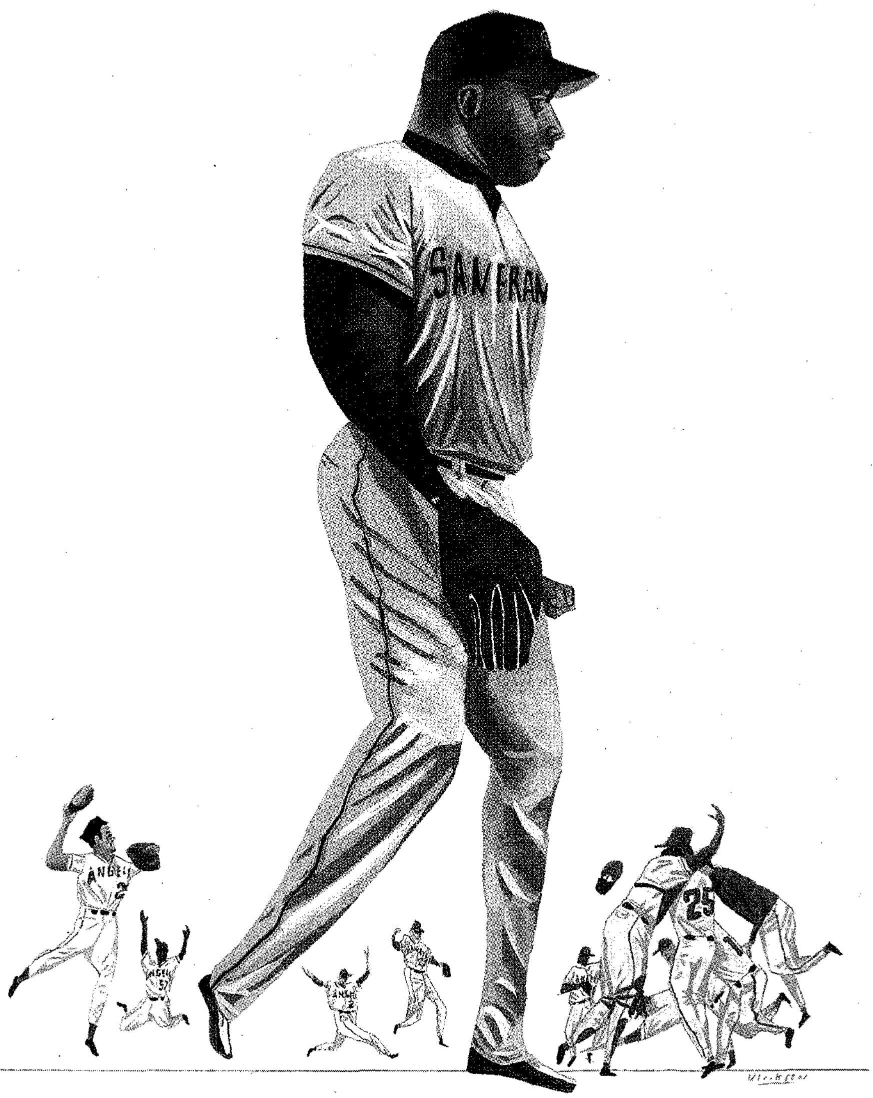
Before the Anaheim Angels ran onto the field for home ballgames this fall, you heard the loudspeakers at Edison Field putting out "Back in the Saddle Again," but the hokey touch may not fit them much longer. The Angels, who went forty-one years without qualifying for a single inning of World Series play, unexpectedly stand as World Champions, and the shade of Gene Autry should be allowed to dismount at last. The founding owner of the 1961 expansion club became known throughout the sport as "the Cowboy," and the brave smile he sustained through the endless back trails of baseball fatuity (he died in 1998, at ninety-one) made everyone hope for a pennant for him someday. Now it's happened. Jackie Autry, his widow, produced his white cowboy hat at the on-field award ceremonials after the team put down the San Francisco Giants, 4–1, in the seventh and deciding World Series game, and waved it for the exulting scarlet-clad home crowd. It was like George Steinbrenner brandishing Babe Ruth's bow tie, only sweeter. The team has belonged to Disney since 1996, but it's up for sale, at a suddenly improved price. Michael Eisner, there on the same stand with the commissioner and the rest of the brass, wore an Angels cap, but appeared stunned under its curved brim; a year ago, the Angels finished forty-one games back in their division.

This was the noisiest World Series to date, with the California fans endlessly whacking those scarlet or black-and-orange plastic ThunderStix together (the sound is like a shipment of tin pails falling downstairs), and the teams knocking out a hundred and forty-two hits and a record twenty-one homers and eighty-five runs. Although the rivals tied or reversed the lead six times during the Series, and four of the games were settled by one run—the Angels took the last two, at home, to grab the title—the humiliation of both sets of starting pitchers (their combined 7.82 earned-run average set another Series record) deprived the games of the anxious silences and sense of foreboding that accompany a classic. This was another action movie, all bangs and blasts, with the Angels' affinity for the retributive big inning providing one main plotline, and Barry Bonds, a monstrous Vaderish force looming up again and again in the middle of the Giants' batting order, the other. Terrific entertainment, and undemanding.

This was not much like last year's Series, one of the best of all, in which the Yankees produced those two last-gasp home runs at the Stadium, and led the Arizona Diamondbacks in the bottom of the ninth inning of the seventh game, out in Phoenix—*of course*, America was thinking—before the defense and Mariano Rivera came unglued and cost the Yanks a fourth straight championship. This year's Yankees, again easy winners in the American League East, disappeared quickly, going down to the wild-card Angels in the divisional playoffs, in four games. Back-to-back eighth-inning home runs by Garret Anderson and Troy Glaus took away a game in the Bronx that El Duque had seemed to have safely in hand; out West, where the even-up elimination was resumed, a 6–1 Yankee lead dissolved while the batters were swinging feebly at the fiery sliders of a twenty-year-old rookie reliever named Francisco Rodriguez. The next day, Doomsday, the Angels ran off ten hits and eight runs in the fifth: the biggest one-inning October outburst in seventy-three years. Adios, empire.

When the debacle was picked over, much blame fell upon the losing Yankee starters—Andy Pettitte had lasted three innings, Mike Mussina four, and David Wells departed after a seven-hit barrage in the fifth—but the Angels batters did similar heavy damage to the Twins' pitchers in the next post-season stage, and to the Giants after that. All three celebrity pitchers are in their thirties, while Roger Clemens, who started the first game and departed in the sixth, long before the Yankees' winning rally, is forty. Age may not have been the only problem, though. Patience, stout pitching, and a strong defense have been the cinder blocks of the splendid Yankee edifice, but they were rarely in evidence this time around. The 2002 Yankees hit a lot of home runs—more than any other team in the American League except the Texas Rangers—but also struck out the most. It was the Angels, you began to see, who kept showing a useful aversion to the K.

As the Yankees began to slip behind in the games out West, it seemed to me that they had taken on a weird resemblance to their remarkable second baseman, Alfonso Soriano, who set all sorts of franchise records this year as a lead-off man but lost his stroke in the late-September going while he lunged and flailed after a fortieth home run, to go with his forty-one stolen bases. Soriano is stubbornly impulsive—he managed only twenty-three bases on balls in seven hundred and forty-one plate appearances—and it's time someone convinced him that the home run and the free pass are part of the same idea. Barry Bonds, for instance. When Bonds' season ended, someone noticed that his all-time hundred and ninety-eight bases on balls plus nine plunkings by the pitchers *taken alone* gave him a higher on-base percentage than Soriano's entire offensive output. Or maybe Alfonso will have noticed the smaller, much less talented Angels lead-off guy, David Eckstein, who said during the Series, "I enjoy fouling off pitches. I definitely like to have at least a six-pitch at-bat. I hate the first-pitch strike, second-pitch groundout." Paul O'Neill used to work on the pitchers this way—you loved watching him—but this year it was the other guys who remembered the knack.



Relentless hitting and a habit of comebacks touched off the Anaheim party.

MARK ULRIKSEN

Old fans and columnists, not all of them in Boston, have been whining about the recent domination of the Yankees and the Atlanta Braves (who have made it into post-season play for eleven straight seasons) and that tilted playing field which is said to favor the oversalaried big-market clubs—except maybe in Queens. Friends of mine were crowing when the Yankees and the Braves and the wealthy, defending-champion Diamondbacks all went down together in the first round of post-season play, and there was a wider delight when the Minnesota Twins, who had once been scheduled for "contraction"—a euphemism for corporate death—by Commissioner Bud Selig, easily won their Central division and then upset the Oakland Athletics in the divisionals. But these same purists, handed a World Series that unexpectedly matched up two vivid wild-card teams with a combined salary total that equals the Yankees' hundred-and-seventy-million-dollar top, showed a sudden affinity for "The West Wing" or wrestling or an early bedtime.

What the snoozers missed was a jamboree of offense, sustained by semi-familiar combatants—barring Barry—who quickly impinged on the imagination. Tens of thousands of grownup Californians brandished stuffed monkeys, screaming for another rally, and surrendered themselves blissfully to a new, Nipponized style of rooting. The Angels played only three games at the Stadium this summer, thanks to the unfortunate new unbalanced schedule, but it didn't take much effort now for me to begin sorting them out: the slashing, overeager Eckstein—a "gnat," to his manager, Mike Scioscia—who requires a full-body, Little League sort of heave to get the ball over from short to first; the pink-bearded Darin Erstad holding out his vertical bat at the pitcher like an artist measuring perspective on his brush; Tim Salmon settling into his

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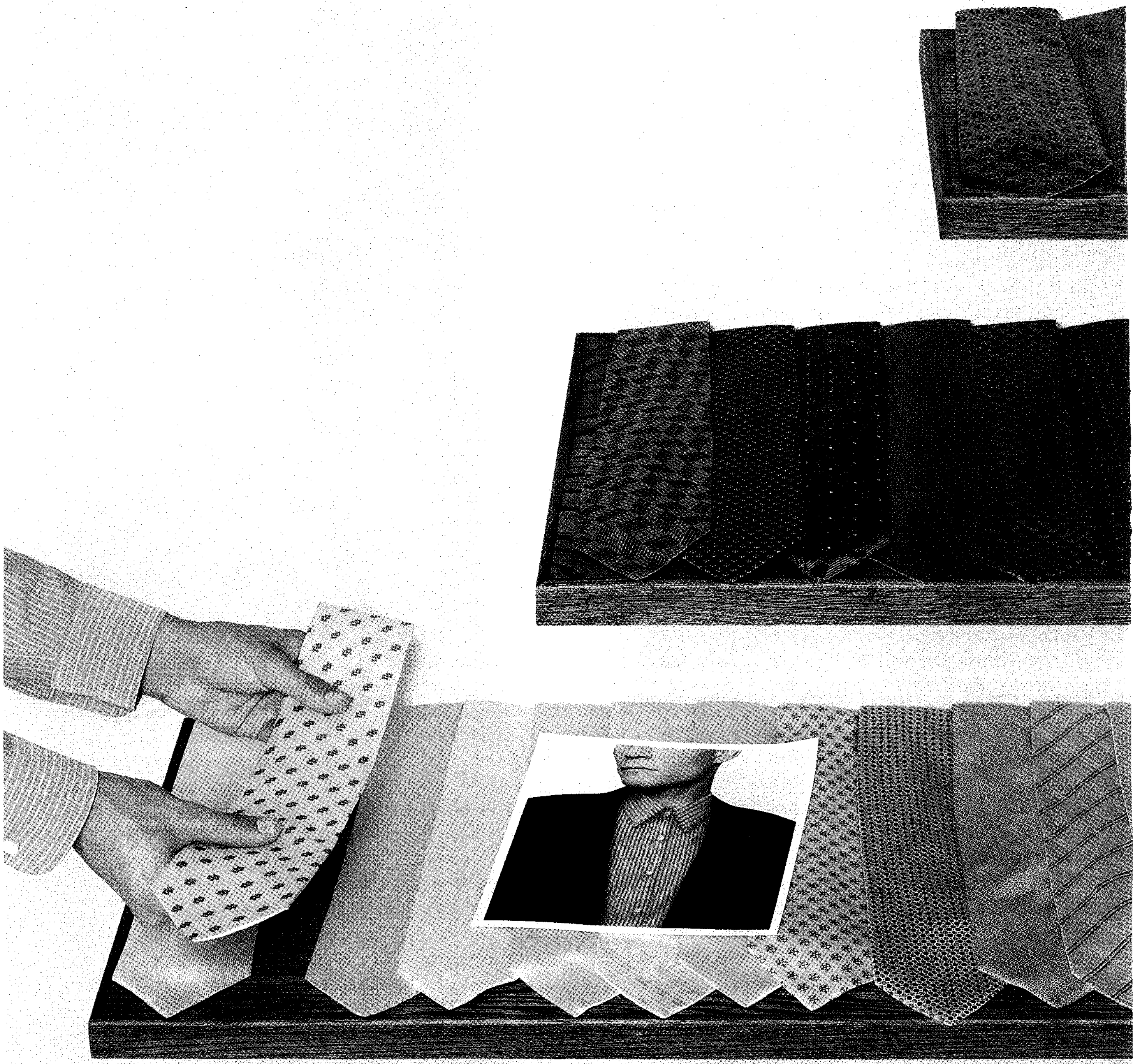

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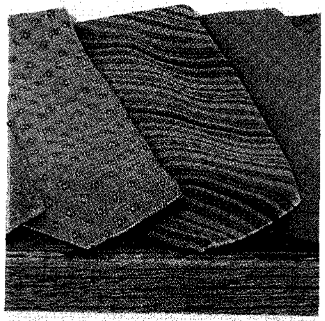

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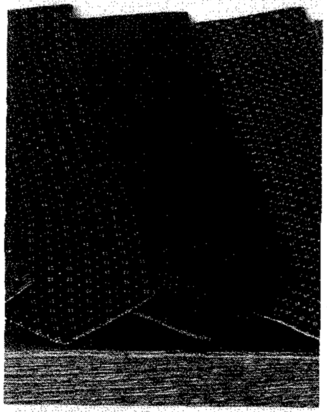

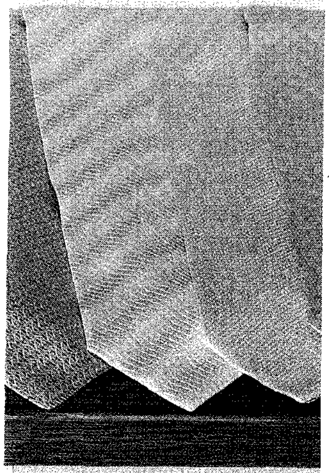

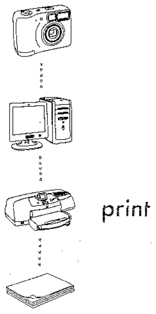

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lounge-chair posture at the plate; and the suave Garret Anderson, a superstar in hiding (everyone says this, but the epithet sticks), with a late, calm, left-handed swing that makes you squirm with pleasure. These and other Angels regulars—the young third-baseman slugger Troy Glaus, second baseman Adam Kennedy, and first baseman Scott Spiezio—sometimes projected the large, earnest blandness of a suburban high-school football team, and you had to look into the bullpen to find the bristly or creepy antidote: right-hander Brendan Donnelly staring at his catcher through his grasshopper-eye spectacles; Ben Weber's windup-toy, Tik-Tok of Oz delivery; the pallid and squinting closer, Troy Percival; and the Olmec-visaged phenom Francisco Rodriguez.

On the Giants' side, the recurrent Barry at times appeared to blot out the rest of the lineup on presence alone, but when his at-bats were over, one way or another, here came the banged-up thirty-seven-year-old catcher, Benito Santiago, once again burdened with insult after another intentional base on balls to Bonds, or with anticlimax after another Bonds homer. Benito has pizzazz—his shar-pei face is framed by diamond earrings, and columns of tattooed Japanese ideographs crawl down his right arm—and his winning two-run homer in the eighth inning of the fourth National League Championship game, against the Cardinals, which followed a well-booed pass to Bonds, was the populist dinger of the year in San Francisco.

Another rookie pitcher for the Angels was twenty-four-year-old John Lackey, who was allowed to start the critical seventh game of the World Series, and won it after delivering five innings of heavy-breathing, furiously concentrated effort, in which he gave up four hits and a lone run. Excellent work, but I found almost more satisfaction in the luck of Chad Zerbe, a thirty-year-old left-handed reliever, who happened to be the pitcher of record for the Giants in the sixth inning of Game Five, just before they blew open a 16–4 laugher, to go ahead in the Series for the last time. Five years ago, he was pitching for the Sonoma County Crushers, in the independent Western League, a back hallway of baseball, and sometimes rode the team bus on a twelve-hour run north to play against the Tri-City Posse, in Pasco, Washington. Neither Nolan Ryan nor Juan Marichal nor Pedro Martínez has a World Series "W" attached to his name, but now Chad Zerbe does.

Before we get on with this California Series—think of it as Stanford vs. U.C.L.A.—a U-turn can swing us back to the regular season and quickly out again. It will go down as a dreary one in most fans' recollections. The death of the thirty-three-year-old Cardinals starter Darryl Kile, on June 22nd, who died in his sleep from an undiagnosed heart disorder while the team was in Chicago, threw a shadow across the games. Locally, the last-place Mets outdid themselves in futility by not winning a single home game in August.

They will go on from here without manager Bobby Valentine, who was fired after the season ended; his successor, Art Howe, the recent and successful skipper of the Oakland Athletics, has been greeted with extreme coolness by croakers in the Greek-chorus media swarm. This was also a summer of apprehensions and ironies surrounding the ancient labor dispute. Boredom and irritation became the prime baseball currency, right up to the morning of August 30th, when a surprise settlement was announced. The strike was averted by some minimal give-and-take between the same old parties, in the face of widespread fan protests and editorial rumblings over the spectacle of an overexpanded but cable-enriched three-and-a-half-billion-dollar monopoly and an élite labor force that averaged just under two and a half million dollars in salary headed for their ninth work stoppage in three decades. The new agreement will require all clubs to share thirty-four per cent of their net local revenues in an evenly divided pool, and increases a luxury tax on the highest-spending clubs, but the ceasefire left an empty taste, more Diet Coke than Mumm's. Some of the blame for this derives, I think,

ISLAND

Sea lavender, in staggered flower—
As for the sea: like a truce meant to last
only until each party has fittingly dismissed its dead—that's
how still it was. And the mind, without
having at all wondered if it could,
                                        or how, moved elsewhere,
to where nothing as I'd understood it, as I'd been
given to understand it, could help, because none of it—
the handling of light as a form of prosody, the body
as body, the soul as a lantern swung, swingable against
competing darknesses, *Who goes there?* and *Who*
has not?—none of it was true. There was no worse
or better part of me—
                              Like choosing which one to be forever
changed into: the invisible sycamore, in fullest leaf,
or the equally invisible horse tied slackly to it.
Not wish; being forced to choose—and the only mercy,
that the end will be swift, irrevocable, and at first look easy. I looked
at you.

—*Carl Phillips*

from Major League Baseball's gooey glorifications of bygone heroes, and its lack of imagination in publicizing the vigor and unpredictability of the game itself.

Ted Williams, who died in July, at the age of eighty-three, went out with almost a liberating rush of national affection, a joyful sadness. There was also a distracting—well, astounding—Page Six sort of sidebar to the obituaries, when it came out that his son John Henry had arranged to have his body cryogenically frozen, to preserve Ted's DNA or batting eye for possible resurrection or something. Later on, I saw a newspaper piece about a psychic who was trying to reach Ted out there, to discuss the bizarreness. But Ted Williams is beyond this, in every sense. His electric energy when batting or talking about batting is its own preservative. No one else in baseball took such an excited interest in the work, or carried it off with such flair, and fans who got to see him up at the plate a few times sensed in some degree that they had been admitted to an inner circle of difficulty and pleasure. The picture of Ted batting is burned deep into the collective New England memory: the youthful, intelligent gaze switching from his bat to the pitcher and back again; the loosening shrug he gave his limbs and shoulders as he stepped in; the lightly bent knees and tilted head; and the bat held well up behind, completing a tall vertical line at plate-side—from foot to knee to elbow to chin to bat tip—that defined for the pitcher the dimensions of the chilling task at hand. His right-front shoulder drooped as the pitcher's motion began (he batted left, of course), putting the bat still farther back, but your attention now swerved to his lead hip, which had cocked and turned even as he strode forward, so that his body, now moving swiftly toward the pitch, simultaneously coiled and twisted away. The extended swing (if he chose to swing) would start a fraction late but then catch up, reaching full power as his hands and arms drove through the ball. But that hipcock was the whole trick: it made you smile even as you drew in your breath. It kept him loose—there was a touch of cha-cha-cha there—and it provided that extra beat of time which hitters call the prime ingredient of a sound swing. He'd given himself a chance.

He never sounded lofty about hitting, despite a lifetime .344 average, five hundred and twenty-one homers, and a .482 lifetime on-base percentage (the best ever), plus the ghostly speculative numbers that could be tacked onto his totals had he not missed the better part of five seasons while in service as a fighter pilot. He appeared to remember baseball at first hand, without sadness or sentimentality. I recall a mid-eighties Florida conversation of his with the eminent outfielder slugger Gary Matthews, then with the Phillies, who wanted to know the best response for a batter to a pitcher's backup slider after two fastballs up and in. "Why, take that pitch, then!" Ted cried. "Just let it go by. Don't be so critical of yourself. Don't try to be a .600 hitter all the time. Don't you know how hard this all is?"

Each year, we fans hold on to the vision of a few plays or pitches, to keep us warm in the winter, and for me these include Jason Giambi's rainy fourteenth-inning grand-slam home run against the Twins at the Stadium, which ended the game with a 13–12 victory; and a catch at Fenway Park by the Athletics' Terrence Long, who reached deep into the right-center-field bullpen in full stride to snatch back a shot by Manny Ramirez. In July, the Minnesota center fielder Torii Hunter was struck in the side by a pitch thrown by the Indians' Danys Baez during a Twins-Indians game in Cleveland. Writhing, Hunter spotted the ball still in the dirt, and unexpectedly grabbed it up and fired back, nailing Baez in the groin. The play, even the thought, was new to me, and I looked for it as one of the entries in baseball's "Memorable Moments," a much touted M.L.B.-MasterCard promotion that took up thirty minutes of prime time before the fourth game of the World Series, in San Francisco, but in vain. The No. 1 memorable moment, it turned out, was Cal Ripken's consecutive-games streak, which was never exactly a *moment*, if you think about it. Nor was Lou Gehrig's teary farewell speech, nor Jackie Robinson's breaking baseball's ancient color bar, the fifth- and third-rated entries, respectively, in the contest. Oddly, the ten finalists did not include Bobby Thom-

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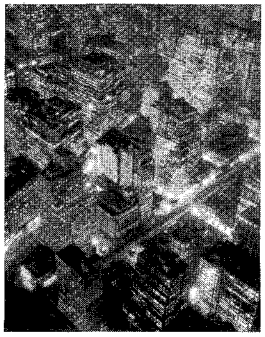

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son's pennant-winning Polo Grounds home run in 1951, or Carlton Fisk's killer twelfth-inning blow against the Reds in 1975, or the moment when someone on the promotional side of things first decided that what the pastime really needed was more on-the-field pageantry and honorings, to break baseball's old habit of slow but remorseless action. George Frazier, a fabled style-setting columnist for the Boston *Globe*, once observed that the warm-weather sport does not include a half-hour pause in which people march out onto the field and throw sticks in the air, but now Bud Selig has taken away that joke, among others.

Barry Bonds, of course, was the central event of this season, just as he was last year, when his seventy-three home runs wiped out Mark McGwire's briefly epochal seventy. Bonds' forty-six round-trippers this time elevated him to a lifetime six hundred and thirteen; he trails only his godfather Willie Mays, Babe Ruth, and Hank Aaron on this list. Bonds is thirty-eight years old, and perhaps three outstanding seasons away from Hank's all-time seven hundred and fifty-five. It will be a stretch for him, but Bonds has been startling us for some time now. For me, his latest achievement, a .370 batting average, which won him the National League batting title by more than thirty points, ranks among his rarer feats. Those bases on balls, taken with his hits, not only gave him the new one-season on-base-percentage mark, of .582, but meant that he did his damage while being allowed fewer than three official at-bats per game. His Most Valuable Player award, announced last week, is his fifth—two more than anyone else has up on the mantel.

Bonds—with his shortened-up black bat twitching behind his ear, and that short-arc slash at the ball ticking within—stands in the middle of the Giants' batting order like an aneurysm. Pitchers think about him before, during, and after each appearance: in the lingo, he keeps turning over the order. He is not much liked—he is not about us, he has always made clear—but I've noticed that his home runs now invite a higher laughter. The Giants' batting coach, Gene Clines, runs up the dugout steps, eyes agoggle, after each Barry blast, shouting "Oh, my Godd!" Bonds' opening-game homer, against the Angels' Jarrod Washburn, came on his first World Series at-bat, after a seventeen-year wait, and replays on the TV monitors picked up an inadvertent little grin on Washburn's face: *Wow, and off me!* Next night, still in Anaheim, Tim Salmon hit two home runs for the Angels in the course of their long comeback win, but Bonds' ninth-inning, four-hundred-and-eighty-five-foot monster, which brought the Giants up to 11–10, was observed by an eager row of Angels from the front railing of their dugout, and you could lip-read Salmon's "That's the farthest ball I've ever seen!" Bonds' fourth and final Series homer, in the sixth inning of Game Six, which put the Giants ahead by 4–0 for the nonce, reversed an inside ninety-seven-mile-an-hour fastball by Frankie Rodriguez—everyone on both teams had been waiting for this face-off—and this time Barry allowed himself a little smile, too.

Murmurings about Bonds' possible use of steroids—he has denied the charge—fade when you watch him play for a few games, because his true strength is so obviously mental. There were no reservations in what you heard about him at Series time. "It's uncanny for a guy to be this locked in for three years now," said Gary Matthews—yes, Ted Williams's old tutee, who was the batting coach for the Milwaukee Brewers this year. "To do it time after time this way—nobody's ever been there before, man." Tom Glavine, the cold-faced Atlanta left-hander, said, "I don't know if you'd pitch to Barry even if Babe Ruth was hitting behind him right now. He's that good a player." In the Giants clubhouse after the fourth Series game, the distinguished ESPN analyst Joe Morgan said, "Every time Bonds walks onto the field, he knows he's the best player there. I saw Willie Mays play and I played against Aaron, but I've never seen anyone as feared in a game as Barry Bonds."

I will take a pass on Bonds' eventual niche in the pantheon—though it's hard to disagree with the *Chronicle* columnist Ray Ratto, who rates him perhaps the third-best player ever, behind only Ruth and Mays. Ratto said that Barry could never expect to climb higher, and Bonds was burned about the restriction as soon as he read it.

The place to appreciate Bonds is at Pacific Bell Park, which was put up three years ago in the China Basin area of downtown San Francisco by the Giants' owner, Peter A. Magowan, at a cost of three hundred and sixty million dollars. It's the first privately financed park since Dodger Stadium, forty years ago, and the pressing load of debt on Magowan and a consortium of local banks and businesses is one of the reasons that a players' strike wasn't allowed to happen this time around. Magowan is a fan, smart enough to understand that making home runs easier for Bonds and future Giants sluggers would be less fun for the ticket-buyers in the end than making sure they'd be rare. Pac Bell is the second most difficult park in the majors for home-run hitters, and the common wisdom around the league last year was that, given a different home venue, Bonds would have hit ninety.

Ticket-holders in Pac Bell's topmost right-field deck, called the View Level, can see a sweep of water, with the far end of the Bay Bridge angling away toward Oakland, and during afternoon games fans all around the park can watch the sail peaks of tall sloops gliding past the twenty-five-foot-high right-field wall. An all-time Giants' "Splash Hits" notice board posted on the wall bears a current "23"—twenty-one of them by Bonds. The bleacher stands in left and center have been kept low, and what you get from behind home plate is a sweep of sky—very few parks do this anymore—and an exhilarating sense of the invisible Bay nearby. When Bonds drove a three-run homer over the wall to tie up the Cardinals, 4–4, in the fifth inning of the third National League Championship game, Fox TV picked up a guy in a yellow kayak out there in McCovey Cove, who fished out the ball with a net. Funny, but what we saw from inside was better. Barry put a tremendous drive on the ball, which sailed and flickered through the soft afternoon air and disappeared into another realm.

The World Series games went on forever, thanks to all those runs, but also zipped by, faster and faster, as the lead changed hands and the ominous end came nearer. This always happens. The Angels edged ahead in the Series, at Pac Bell, after Game Three, in which they batted around in the third inning and again in the fourth, putting up four runs each time, but the Giants pulled level with a 4–3 win in Game Four, the next day. Then they won again, in the 16–4 blowout, and the lads (as old-time San Francisco fans think of them) headed back to Anaheim needing but one more win to take their first World Series since 1954.

I had my hopes way up, too—my

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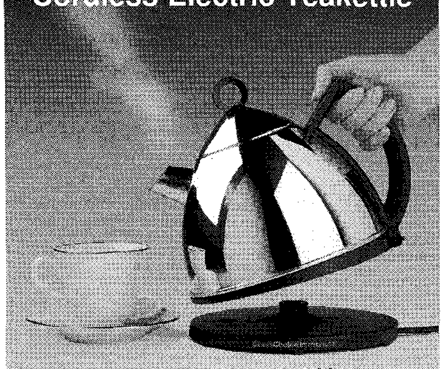

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loyalty to the Giants goes back to Carl Hubbell and Bill Terry—but I couldn't help noticing that even when the Angels lost they kept right on hitting. Back in that 11–10 win, in Game Two, none of their batters—not one in the forty they sent up to the plate—struck out. When I mentioned this to the Anaheim batting coach, Mickey Hatcher, he said, "Yes, and did you see that most of our home runs have been solos, with nobody on base?" He said this approvingly. "We like each of our hitters to be his own batting coach. Our guys aren't thinking home runs; they're thinking on-base percentage, runs scored, and R.B.I.s. Getting those three in mind is the big thing we try to accomplish in spring training."

Hatcher has a pink, rowdy-looking face—he will be remembered as the Dodger batter who helped sink the Oakland A's with two numbing first-inning home runs in the 1988 World Series—but here he sounded like a free swinger who'd found holy redemption.

The house of baseball contains many ways, and the Giants' own comeback win, in the chilly winds of Game Four, started with a ten-foot single squirted off home plate by pitcher Kirk Rueter (allowed to bat for himself because skipper Dusty Baker desperately needed to rest his bullpen) in the fifth, and a bunt by lead-off man Kenny Lofton that meandered up the foul line like a six-year-old bicyclist's first solo: fair, fair, foul—oop, fair—foul, then miraculously fair again. It was watched from close range by the hovering third baseman, Troy Glaus, whose late grab plucked it up from the white of the foul line: base hit. A couple of singles and a sacrifice tied up the game at 3–3, and David Bell's whistling drive to center in the eighth, struck against Frankie Rodriguez, of all people, won the essential game. The screechings and leapings and back-poundings of the bundled-up Giants rooters next to me in the left-field bleachers (where I was sitting, amid the frozen flower of American sporting media) were being repeated pretty much all around the Bay. During the second act of the San Francisco Opera's production of Mozart's "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," the tenor Paul Groves stepped forward during the recitative that precedes Belmonte's celestial aria to interpolate "Tree-oomph! Tree-oomph! In baseball, Giants vier, Angels drei!" Tumult.

The next evening's excessive events—this was the Giants' 16–4 runaway—brought cacophonous Pac Bell celebrations as well, and a pure Dada flash when J. T. Snow, rushing in with the Giants' ninth run, on a triple by Lofton, saw out of the corner of his eye the tiny three-and-a-half-year-old batboy, Darren Baker, weirdly collecting Lofton's bat from beside home plate. This was a digitalized startler: baby Forrest Gump in the Fall Classic. Scary, too, because the Angels catcher Bengie Molina was bracing himself for the imminent arrival of another base runner, David Bell, but Snow, like an old-style railroad man bending for a mailbag, leaned back as he crossed the plate and grabbed Darren by the front of his jacket, snatching him to safety. The replays, which ran on television all the next day, ended with a reaction shot of Darren's dad, Dusty Baker, clutching his ears in embarrassment. If the Giants had won the championship, J.T.'s save would have been their Christmas card.

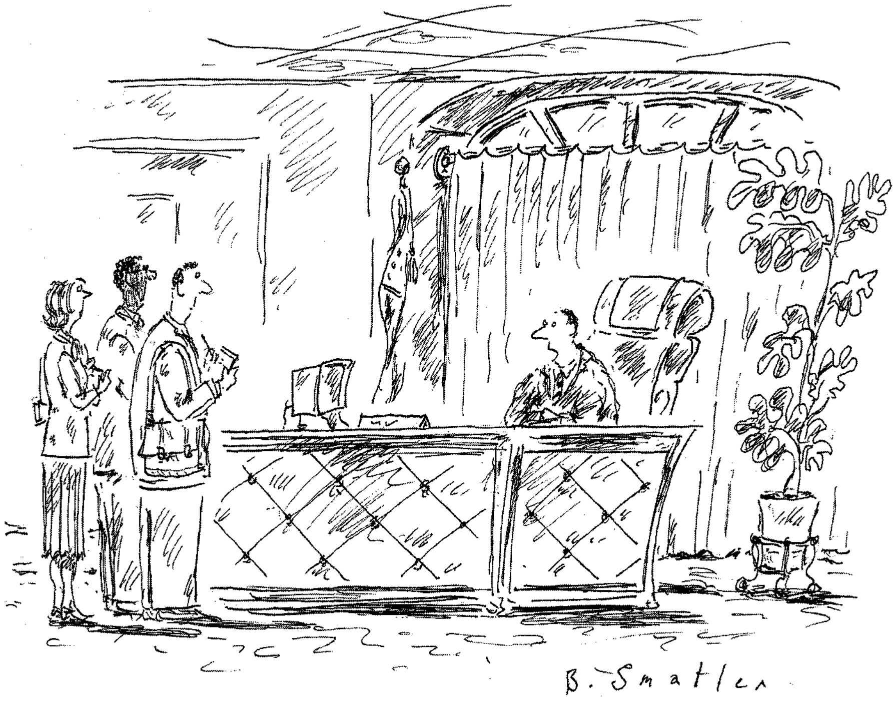
All week long, I'd been trying to decide which of these two lively clubs deserved to win the World Series, on history and mojo. I'd seen the Giants fail in four different post-season playoffs and two World Series, going back to 1962, my first year on this beat. I recalled their collapse in 1987, when the team went back to St. Louis, ahead by three games to two in the League Championships, and dropped the closing two to the Cardinals. Also, this was Dusty Baker's last hurrah, after a successful decade at the helm; he and Magowan have had a falling out, and he has just stepped down. (His successor will be Felipe Alou, who must be ravished to find a Barry Bonds in his lineup, after his lean years with the Montreal Expos.) Jeff Kent will not be re-signed, in all likelihood, and free agents David Bell and Reggie Sanders may not return, either. This was a last stand for the sprightly old bunch. On the other hand, I still held a clear memory of the shocked faces of Gene Autry and Angels manager Gene Mauch when, in 1986, an almost certain series-clinching win against the Red Sox evanesced after a four-run Sox rally capped by Dave Henderson's homer in the ninth. Two more games were required to complete the debacle, but the two Genes never did get to a World Series, and the reliever Donnie Moore, who surrendered the Henderson blow, couldn't stop brooding about his failure; three years later, he committed suicide. Your turn to win now, Angels.

The expert I wanted to consult in this dilemma was my departed friend Bill Rigney, who managed the Giants for their first three years out in San Francisco and again in 1976, and also managed the Angels for a decade, from their inception. I needed Rig, because I know he would have put his hand up to his mouth and whispered, "Giants!"

Baseball is fun until it suddenly isn't, and even now the shock of the Giants' two losses in Anaheim awaits me, a beast in the bed, when I wake up in the night. Back at Pac Bell, Mike Scioscia, talking about his rotation, had said, "Kevin Appier is going to start Game Six, unforeseeing anything that might happen tonight." The participle, a fresh depiction of baseball's uncertainty, stuck in my mind, and perfectly fits the Giants' and the Giants fans' condition late in Game Six. Everything had gone their way so far in the evening, with Appier swiftly dismissed and joy accumulating from thirty-nine-year-old Shawon Dunston's two-run homer in the fifth (Dunston kissed his son, Shawon, Jr., another member of Dusty's Boys Town, on the way back to the dugout) and Bonds' solo job an inning later. Barry kissed his son Nikolai, too, and then Dusty Baker, out on the mound to relieve his starter, Russ Ortiz, with one out in the seventh and the Giants up by 5–0, unexpectedly handed him the game ball, as a keepsake and memorial. Kiss, kiss—it was Christmas in October.

The Giants reliever Felix Rodriguez—the other F. Rodriguez, in our thinking—arriving in this happy scene, found runners at first and second base, with one out. A bare eight outs were required for the party, starting perhaps with the familiar awaiting batter, first baseman Scott Spiezio. A switch-hitter, Spiezio took up a left-handed stance against the righty Rodriguez. Spiezio crowds the plate, but Rodriguez has a rising four-seam fastball that he can deliver reliably to the outer corner against lefties, away from their power. He did this seven times, with Spiezio smoothly fouling off four of the pitches with late swings. With the count full, Rodriguez tried a fresh plan, down and in, just above the batter's knees, and Spiezio hit it into the right-field stands for a three-run homer.

It required three more Angels runs,



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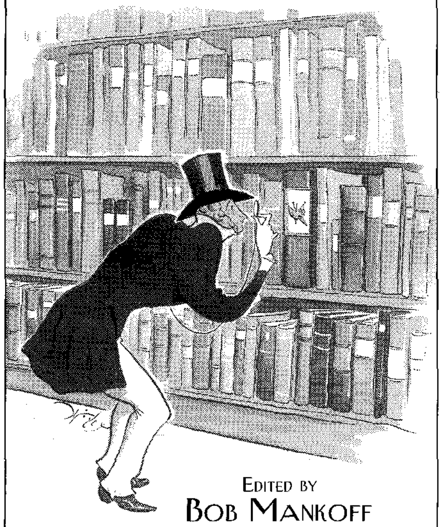

EDITED BY BOB MANKOFF

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which came in the eighth, and one more Angels comeback the next day—a pitchers' battle, of all things, in which all the runs in the 4–1 victory had arrived by the third inning—to settle this World Series, but I think everyone up in the Bay part of California knows that it was the Spiezio at-bat that ruined the festival. What I said—what we all said at the moment—was "Uh-oh," and we were right. The Angels' comeback from a 5–0 deficit was the best ever by a Series team facing elimination. Now the Anaheim rooters, perhaps leaving their ThunderStix home in the closet, will have a fresh season in which to discover whether their Angels are the real deal or a bunch of hardworking, doubt-free swingers who stayed hot for five late weeks of baseball in 2002.

Spiezio, who is thirty, was prepared for his moment, if we weren't. He'd been practicing for it for more than a quarter century. His father, Ed Spiezio, a former third baseman who played in two World Series with the Cardinals, began pitching to Scott when he was three or four years old, and already a boy switch-hitter. Ed built two mounds in the back yard—one at the regular distance, and a forty-foot one to speed him up against fastballs—and had Scott situational hitting almost from the beginning. At the end of the day, every day, the situation was always Game Seven of the World Series, with the tying and winning runs aboard. The Spiezios did this all summer long, and in cold weather—this was in Morris, Illinois, where Ed Spiezio has a furniture store—they'd move into the basement and do it some more.

"He'd imitate different pitchers—sometimes special guys like Kent Tekulve, throwing from off to the side," Spiezio *fils* said in the clubhouse. "He'd even act like he was a left-hander, which was sort of impossible. But he was getting me ready to be a major-league ballplayer. It was my whole life."

Spiezio, who has a youthful look and a cool little mustache and beard, is a rock singer in his spare time, with a group called Sandfrog, but he'd made baseball sound like the more exotic line of work: something that kids might really want to look into one of these days. "Listen," he said, "I enjoy it. The time I put in was pure enjoyment." ♦

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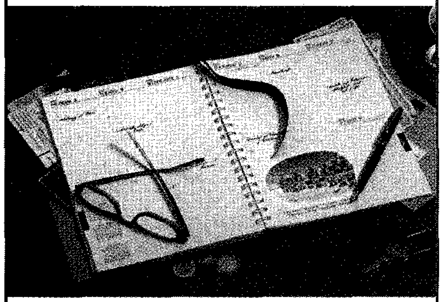

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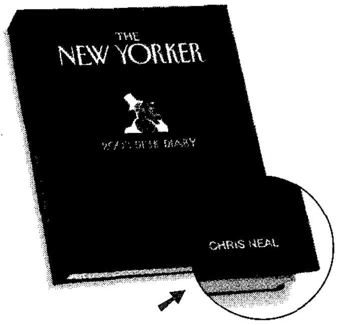

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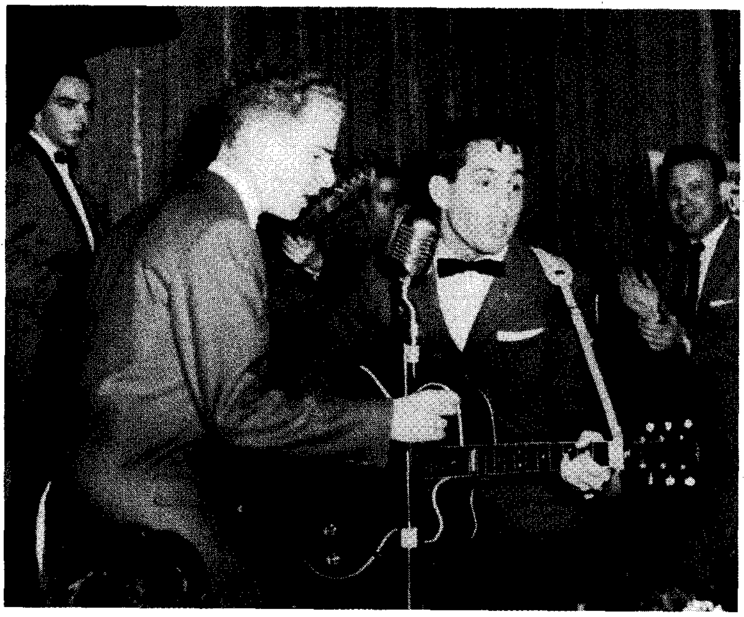
PROFILES

THE GIFT

Paul Simon's search for the next song.

BY ALEC WILKINSON



Last spring, shortly before Paul Simon began rehearsing his band for a tour of Europe, he wrote three fragments of music—the first to occur to him in a year and a half. It was as long a dry period as he had ever been through. I went one night to a baseball game with him, and, going home in his car, he said, "The melodies have started to come. It's a relief."

Songwriters sometimes describe the sensation of songs arriving nearly intact. Simon has had this experience (the shower, "Still Crazy After All These Years"), but not often. His talent is more the patient and painstaking kind than the ecstatic. Songwriting, he says, is "trial and error repeated almost endlessly." A song usually takes him three months to finish. Typically, when he concludes a body of work, he thinks that he has depleted his resources, and that they won't be replenished. "I always feel that the situation is serious," he said in the car. "I'm in a vacuum, it's a dearth, and then there's something—a few notes, a phrase—and I say, 'I guess there's something,' but it's so small that I don't even know whether to count it."

Simon regards writing songs as the effort to find form for sounds he hears in his head. "Maybe ten, fifteen years ago," he said, "I realized that what I was fascinated with, couldn't explain, was *sound*—that you can't really say why a combination of sounds is moving or feels really good and right—and the whole game was: Can I get the sounds in my head on tape?" His driver brought the car to a stop at a light. Simon looked out the window. "I should get ready to work," he said softly. "You go into training—you play more, think more, listen more—instead of fretting over why you're not hearing the melodies."

To rehearse, Simon put the new work aside. The last time he did that, three years ago, he had five songs under way when he left them to prepare for a tour with Bob Dylan. Several months passed, the tour was over. Visiting a friend in New Mexico, he listened to recordings of the songs—he hadn't yet written any words—and was very pleased. Then he realized that he no longer felt any vestige of the impulse that had supplied them.

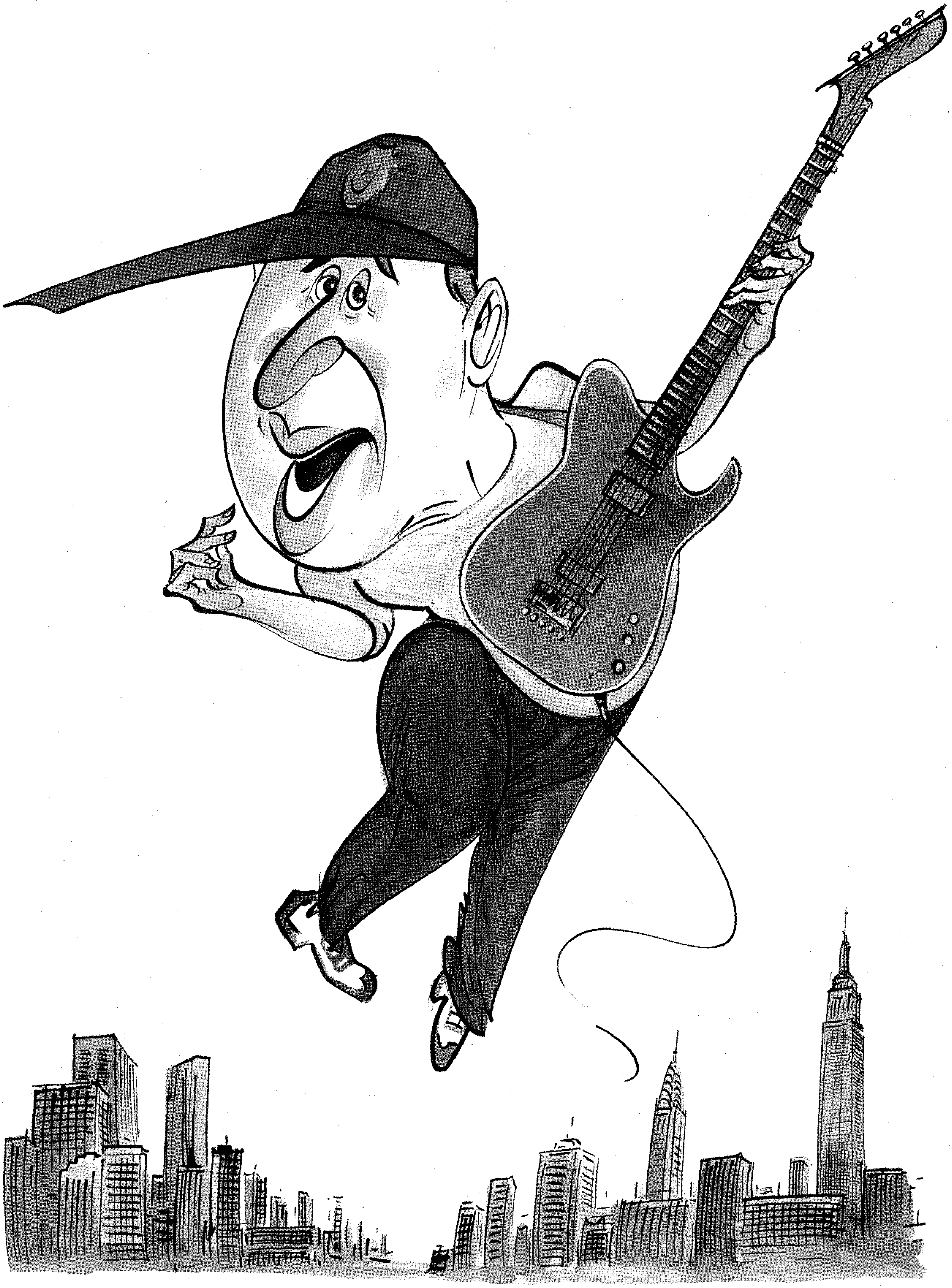
"I thought they had come from an inspired place," he said, "and I was just furious with myself for interrupting the work. What a fool I'd been, I thought, because I had just arrogantly assumed that the inspiration would return when I wanted it to. Then I thought, God, I have to get the rest. Because five tracks is only half an album. Of course five songs is half an album, but what if the point was: This was a level of joy in creating that you always hoped to attain. You think the experience involves ten because you need ten for the marketplace. Maybe you should just appreciate the experience, maybe that was the point, and there won't be any more." He sighed. "Anyway, another couple of months went by. I just had to wait."

The feeling of joy eventually returned. Many of the lyrics uncharacteristically came to him so quickly that he felt as if he were "taking dictation." After he had recorded the songs (on "You're the One," his latest CD, released in 2000), he took the tapes to Los Angeles and played them for the executives at his record company. "They were nice, respectful—it's a great honor and so on—but they didn't actually understand," he said. "Or at least I thought they didn't understand. That record was hypnotic, in its way, and they were thinking more about 'speed and impact.' "

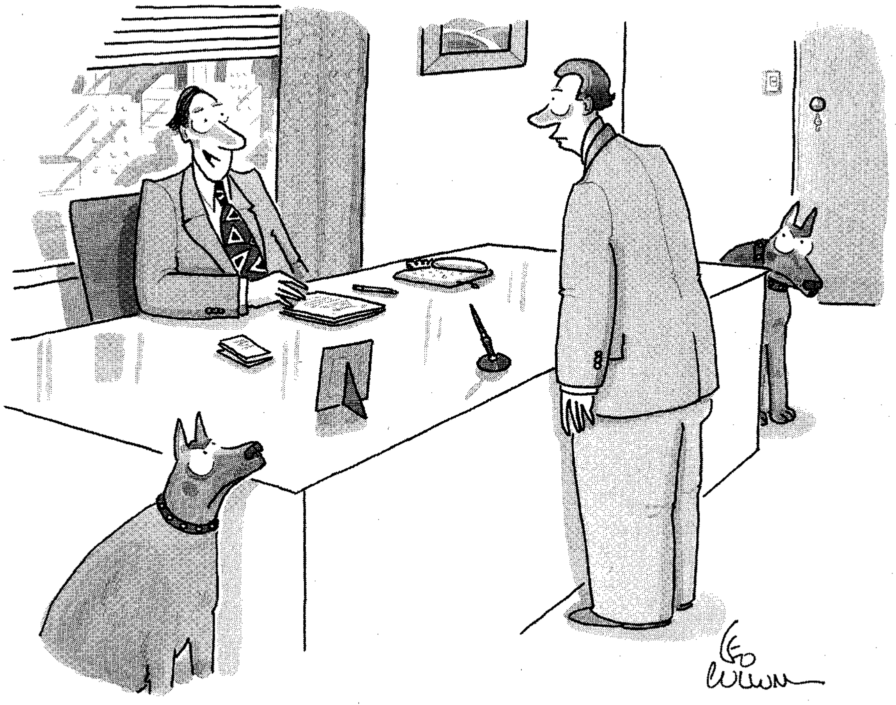
On his way home, Simon stopped at his friend's house in New Mexico, and while he was there the company's response began to unsettle him. "I thought, Why am I so desperately wanting to enter the marketplace? And then I said to myself, with a couple of synaptic leaps that I'm leaving out, 'You're just a big liar. And I know what the lie is.' " The voice reprimanding him had the tone of an Old Testament figure. " 'This is Judgment Day, and there's no defense,' it announced. 'I'm going to tell you a deep truth, and you're going to listen. You made this thing that you received partly as a gift, and you took it immediately to the marketplace without sufficiently appreciating it. And when you intuited that the marketplace wasn't going to accept it you knew right away that you had no business taking such a thing there. The gift was the point.' "

Simon paused. "It got worse," he

COURTESY PAUL SIMON ARCHIVES; OPPOSITE: GERALD SCARFE



Simon, opposite, with Art Garfunkel, says of his career, "The whole game was: Can I get the sounds in my head on tape?"



"Pretend to ask for a raise."

went on. " 'You don't like that?' the voice said. 'Then atone. Be a better person. You're lucky that this didn't occur on your deathbed, so that it would be the last thought you had.' "

Several weeks went by before something in him relaxed, and he thought, You exaggerate. You were born with a talent and you worked hard at it, and the result gave people a lot of pleasure, and no matter what you did that was wrong you can't throw that out. You didn't do it to give people pleasure. You did it to see if you could make the sounds in your imagination come out on tape.

The insight was followed, even so, by the year and a half of drought, during which Simon couldn't listen to anyone's music, especially his own, and he felt that he might not write any songs again.

Simon is less nomadic than musicians often are. What keeps him mostly at home is his wife, the singer Edie Brickell, who is from Texas, and their three young children. Nevertheless, he travels frequently. Last spring, he and his family spent ten days in Jamaica; he went to London for a week to visit Harper, his oldest son, from his first marriage, who plays guitar in a rock-and-roll band; he went to Memphis to meet Joseph Shabalala, the leader of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the Zulu singing group that appears on Simon's 1986 album "Graceland"; he went a few times to his house by the ocean at the eastern end of Long Island; he made trips to Connecticut to see how the contractors were doing in renovating a house that he was moving to in the fall so that his children could have a life in the country; and he and his wife went to Venice to celebrate ten years of marriage. The rest of the time, he kept to a fairly regular schedule. He took the kids to school, then came home and worked with a physical trainer for two and a half hours; then he played guitar, then sometimes he picked up the kids. He has, of course, no material incentive to work. His offspring will be prosperous for generations. He is like the rich painters who have ranches or islands or palazzi and spend their days looking at sketches and patterns of clouds out the window or reading and staring at canvases. The time passes in a manner that is both leisurely and anxious. Eventually, he tells himself, "You've got to go to work. Try this, try that—it's not fun. Who said it was going to be fun? Go to work."

When Simon went to Memphis in May to meet Shabalala, I went, too. Shabalala wants to build a museum devoted to South African music, especially the kind he heard as a child on a farm; he is now sixty. Ladysmith Black Mambazo was performing near Memphis, and Simon thought that visiting the Delta Blues Museum, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, about an hour and a half south of the city, might suggest to Shabalala a plan. Simon also wanted to visit a health clinic in Clarksdale to which he gives a lot of money through the Children's Health Fund in New York, a charity he started with his friend Dr. Irwin Redlener.

It was raining when Simon and I left New Jersey in a small jet he had rented. When we got to Memphis, one of those jeeplike cars that make you feel as if you're seeing everything from the perspective of a man on horseback had been delivered to the terminal for us, and Simon drove. Leaving the airport, he took a wrong turn, and we wandered briefly before finding the tall buildings on the horizon.

Heading toward downtown, Simon described his last trip to Mississippi, some years back. "When I was recording with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section," he said, "we did this song called 'Take Me to the Mardi Gras,' and we wanted to get a Dixieland marching band for it, but we didn't want to go all the way to New Orleans. We were in Alabama, so we found this band and decided to meet them halfway, in Jackson, Mississippi, at a studio called Malaco Sound. When we get to Jackson, no one knows where Malaco Sound is. I pull into a gas station and ask 'Does anyone know where Malaco Sound is?' and a guy leaning on the register with a toothpick in his mouth says slowly, 'Tell you what. See that there road?' I turn around, look at the road, say, 'Yeah, O.K., I see the road.' 'Take that there road till you reach a golf field,' he says. 'Go past the golf field about a quarter mile, then turn left and come back.' 'O.K.,' I say. 'In a quarter mile make a right turn,' he says. 'That's the road for Malaco Sound.' I said, 'Why don't you just make a left turn after you pass the golf field?' And he took the toothpick out of his mouth slowly and started nodding and said, 'You could do that, too.' "

When we got to our hotel, Shabalala was sitting in the lobby, at a table by a fountain. He was drinking tea. He is a small, sturdily built man, with a round, open face. He and Simon hugged each other, then the three of us went out and got in the car. Shabalala had brought a tape of South African women singing traditional farm music, without accompaniment. For several of the songs, he had written parts for Ladysmith Black Mambazo, whose ten members are men. The first song, a hymn, was sung in Zulu. Instead of progressing in the stately manner of a Protestant hymn, it advanced like a spiritual, with hesitations in the phrasing and silences between the verses. Six or eight women took part. Their voices were pure and unadorned, and the singing was deeply felt. The men's voices entered unexpectedly after what I took to be the first verse, answering the women's, and the contrast between the two registers and textures was thrilling. "I don't know what I can do with it," Shabalala said. "I hope I can do something. I'm still working on it."

We passed shabby little shopping malls with discount stores and stores selling car parts, several pawnshops, a burial ground next to a junk yard, the Crystal Palace roller-skating rink, and then, as if a piece of stage scenery had been pulled into the wings, we were driving among crop rows that ran on either side of us to the horizon. The road was so straight that it seemed to have been taped onto the fields. The next song was a work song, Shabalala said. Along with the singers, he whistled sharply now and then, like a man calling cattle. "I never heard you do that," Simon told him. "It's a good sound for you."

"There was a young man on the farm where I made the recording," Shabalala said. "He was playing a five-string guitar, and whistling like that, and he reminded me that I did that when I lived on a farm."

We arrived at the museum—a warehouse beside some railroad tracks—around lunchtime. The director, Tony Czech, led us past glass cabinets with guitars and photographs, walls with displays of records, and a room that contained the shack in which Muddy Waters was born. Simon is often regarded uncharitably by musicians who don't know him. The impression they have is that to make "Graceland" he went to South Africa, bought some records, came home and wrote lyrics, cheated the South African musicians out of royalties, paid up only when called to account, and finally walked into the sunset with boxcars of cash. Anyone who had the idea could have made a fortune from it, they think, and Simon just had it first. I wanted to know what Shabalala thought, so, at a moment when Czech had Simon's attention, I asked Shabalala when he and Simon had first met.

"Paul came to South Africa in 1985," he said. "I was on tour. When I called home, my wife tell me that Paul Simon want to talk to me. 'Are you kidding?' I say. 'How can I go to New York? He's a New York guy.' She say, 'No, he's in Johannesburg. He's waiting for you.' But I was in doubt. How does he know me? So I take a car to Johannesburg and somebody lead me to the studio, and I find many people waiting and Paul leading an audition. When I come in, he stop everything, and he say, 'Joseph, I hear that you are on tour. I'm Paul Simon.' And I think, Is this him? There are people supposed to talk to Paul, but not me. He say, 'I love to work with you. I am a fan of Ladysmith Black Mambazo,' and the way he say it, it was like music, like he was singing it. I discovered in his eyes this man is full of music. And I say, 'To work together, what is it about, are there songs?' And he say yes. I say that we should work together, but I didn't know how. 'Are we going to blend together? The accent is so different.' "

On "Graceland," the song "Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes" begins with Ladysmith Black Mambazo's voices. I asked whose idea that had been. "Paul ask me, 'Joseph, can you please bless this song?' " Shabalala said. "He play it for me, and I listen and said, 'This song is O.K.' He say, 'I still need your blessing,' so I write five lines in Zulu."

I asked what they are in English.

"He sing, 'She's a rich girl, she don't try to hide it, diamonds on the soles of her shoes.' So I answer what he said. 'It's not usually so,' I say, 'but now we see girls that can afford to maintain themselves.' "

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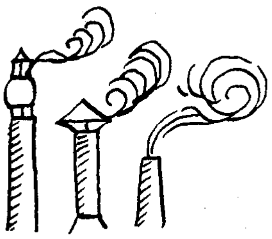
Tony Czech brought us to a stop in front of a glass cabinet that had in it a National steel guitar—a guitar, that is, with a body made of steel. He opened the case and took the guitar out and handed it to Simon. Simon stood on one foot and balanced the guitar on his raised knee and played a couple of simple blues figures, the way any kid in a guitar store would, and then he moved his hand high up on the neck and played a descending line, a succinct, self-contained remark. He gave the guitar back and had his picture taken with Czech and the cashier at the gift shop; then he bought some CDs—among them one by the blues singer and guitarist Robert Johnson, because Shabalala had never heard him.

From the museum, we drove to the health clinic, where we walked through the halls with the director, a woman named Aurelia Jones-Taylor, and doctors and nurses came out of doorways to look at Simon, and a little girl in the waiting room raised her head from her mother's lap to see what the fuss was about. Then Jones-Taylor took us to lunch at a place called Abe's BBQ. After lunch, Simon and Shabalala and I made the trip back to Memphis listening to Robert Johnson. I drove and Shabalala sat in the back seat, humming along and every once in a while shouting softly, "Yeah!"

The next morning, Simon and I flew home through turbulence, and neither of us felt very well when we landed. That night, Simon was travelling to London to visit his son. As Angel Aponte, his driver, was taking us back to the city, I asked about some lines in "Darling Lorraine," a song on "You're the One" in which a man and a woman meet, court, marry, squabble, make up, and then the woman falls sick and dies. The narrator, whose manner is evasive, is named Frank. "All my life I've been a wanderer," he sings. Then, "Not really, I mostly lived near my parents' home." Describing Lorraine's death late one night in a hospital bed, Simon sings, "All the trees were washed with April rain / and the moon in the meadow took darling Lorraine." The lines are the song's emotional peak, and so mysterious and poetic that I wondered how they had occurred to him.

"It could have been the heavens, I guess, but I used the moon," he said. "My apartment's across from the Sheep Meadow, in Central Park, so that's there. 'Trees being washed,' a ritual of death—washing the deceased—but because it's April it gives you a feeling of the sadness. 'April is the cruelest month,' sadness. It wasn't winter trees—it was the moon in the meadow that had a kind of hopefulness to it that seemed to work."



A few years ago, Simon was on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" to promote his Broadway musical, "The Capeman," and Winfrey tried to coax him into saying that he regarded himself as a genius. (She failed.) I asked if the exchange had felt awkward. "I never thought of myself as an artist until I was in my forties," he said, "and then it was only as a personality type. I thought I was a bright guy, real smart. I could figure stuff out. I was good at things. That's what I thought, but there were periods when I couldn't explain what I wrote. I don't think I'm special, and I never did—I didn't think, I'm twenty-one and I've written 'The Sound of Silence.' When I wrote 'Bridge Over Troubled Water,' I thought, That's better than I usually write. As decades go by, you're grateful for the talent you have, but there's a time when you just put away your feelings and work. Whoever is sitting at the top of the heap, that's a genius," he said disdainfully. "Anyway, I wasn't ever sitting at the top."

He continued, "As you get older, you're looked at differently. Now I'm 'legendary.' It means that kids don't listen to you as much as you might like, you're not talking about what they're interested in, and even if you were they wouldn't be listening to you any more than kids want to listen to their parents."

He shrugged. "Actually, these observations form an internal dialogue of very little consequence, because you're going to do what you're going to do anyway. The question I have, though, is when you can create something as complicated rhythmically and thematically as 'Darling Lorraine,' how do you measure the quality, especially since the earlier work was enormously popular? I can still put together 'Darling Lorraine' or 'You're the One.' It won't mean as much as 'Graceland' or 'Bridge Over Troubled Water.' Those songs had an effect on people's lives. 'Mrs. Robinson' or 'Still Crazy After All These Years,' or '50 Ways'—they're in the culture. If the work isn't part of the popular culture, is it as meaningful? Even though there are examples of posthumous recognition, for the most part a song's a hit or it's gone."

The phone in the car rang, and Simon answered it. He listened for a moment, and then, his voice full of affection—he was speaking to his wife—he said, "Ten minutes. We're on the West Side Highway."

About a week after Simon got back from London, and shortly before the rehearsals began, I met him at his office in Times Square, where he played a CD he had made of the two fragments he had written—he hadn't yet written the third. One of the tracks was a slow shuffle, based on the descending line he had played at the Blues Museum, and the other was a briskly rising arpeggiated figure, a series of simple chords—a guitar practice pattern that he had adapted. The playing was skillful and intricate, and I asked why when he performed he let other guitarists play the more complicated parts. "I can't play and sing," he said. While I sat and listened to the shuffle, Simon stood behind me and sang nonsense syllables and every once in a while added a line. "Hell, yeah, I'm angry at myself, can't blame no one else, so I'm angry at myself" is the only one I heard clearly.

After a few minutes, he turned off the disk and sat down. "That's the beginning," he said. Then he asked, "Do you mind if I play the guitar? I feel more comfortable with a guitar in my hands." From a closet, he got one and sat down and again played the figure he had played at the museum. "It could go a lot of ways," he said. "If I added a blues harp, it would sound blues. I could add an acoustic bass. My son Harper thought it might sound good without a bass at all—a guitar record, which I haven't made in years."

He put the guitar down. "A lot of it anyhow is just slogging away," he said. "The first tracks, when I came out of the studio, I was ambivalent. I went through, first, denial—I don't think it's good, but maybe it's good and people will like it. Then I get to, I don't care what people think, it's no good. I have to find somebody to help me fix it, because I don't know what to do." He leaned forward and put his elbows on his knees. "I was thinking, I don't know who's going to help," he said, "and when I get over being annoyed I'll take out everything that I don't like, then I'll revise it. I worked with Vincent Nguini, the guitar player in my band, and Steve Gadd, the drummer, and we fixed the guitar part and the drums, and now it's right. There's still a section that needs to be improved, and I could easily fool with the bass and play with the sounds of the record, making the arrangements richer, which at least I have a theory about how to do, but since I'm going out on the road again, and the rehearsals are about to start, I'm going to leave it."

I asked if I could hear the songs once more, and he said sure. "Do you like it with the singing, or no singing?" he asked.

I said I liked the singing.

He turned the disk back on and began to sing quietly. From the corner of my eye, I watched him dancing, with his feet in place and his arms and shoulders moving in an angular way, as if he were a figure in a hieroglyph.

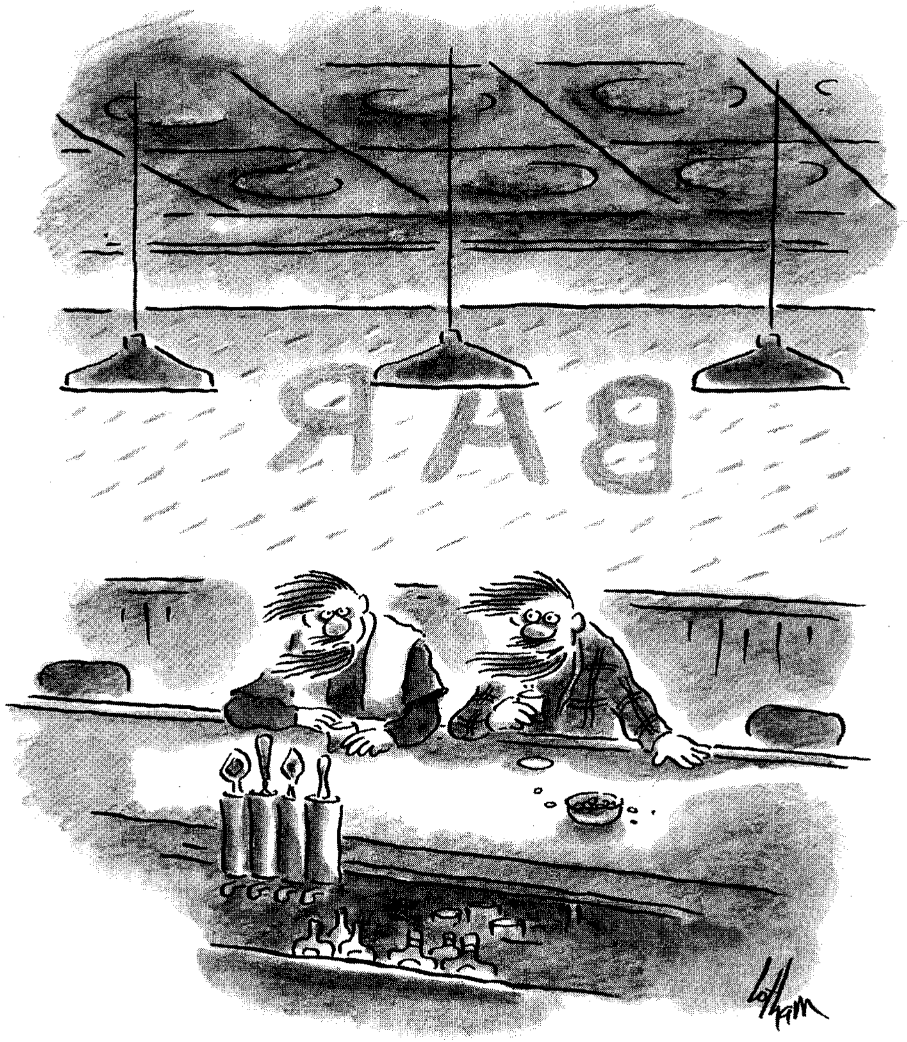
Simon is the size of a jockey, except that instead of being wiry he is barrel-chested and muscular. His hands are small and thick; they look like paws. His expression is habitually solemn, and it always has been. As a toddler, he smiled so rarely that his parents called him Cardozo, after the Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo, whose manner was pointedly grave. When he went as a child to candy stores to buy comic books, people would say "What's the matter?" and he always thought, Why do they ask me that? His gestures are minimal and understated, and so is his manner. His sentences trail off and are completed by a slight extension of the chin, a mild widening of the eyes, a delicate shrug. His band members know that the remarks "I don't think so" or "Yeah, but . . . ," delivered with no special inflection, amount to an emphatic dismissal. The extravagant subtlety of his manner and movements must once have been a refinement, an awareness that a small man making flamboyant gestures or talking too loudly might look comical. Onstage, he is subdued. He tends to raise his arms and wave his hands wanly—and he probably shouldn't. He has never been very comfortable with his appearance. A friend of his told me that he won't look at a photograph of himself. When I asked Simon if this was true, he said, "Yeah," then added, "Actually, it's better if you do look, because then you can do something about it."

He prefers reading poetry—especially Blake, Yeats, and John Neihardt—to fiction. Fiction writers "are in the world of the imagination," he says, "and I'm in the world of the imagination, so it's too much." He also likes to read "science for the layman, because I was never any good at science, and I'm curious about it now." Growing up, he was a good baseball player, and is surprised that even though he no longer takes part in the sport he sometimes dreams that he is drawing a walk, or can hit major-league pitching, or that he is standing in the outfield and can't pick up his feet. "It can go either way," he says.

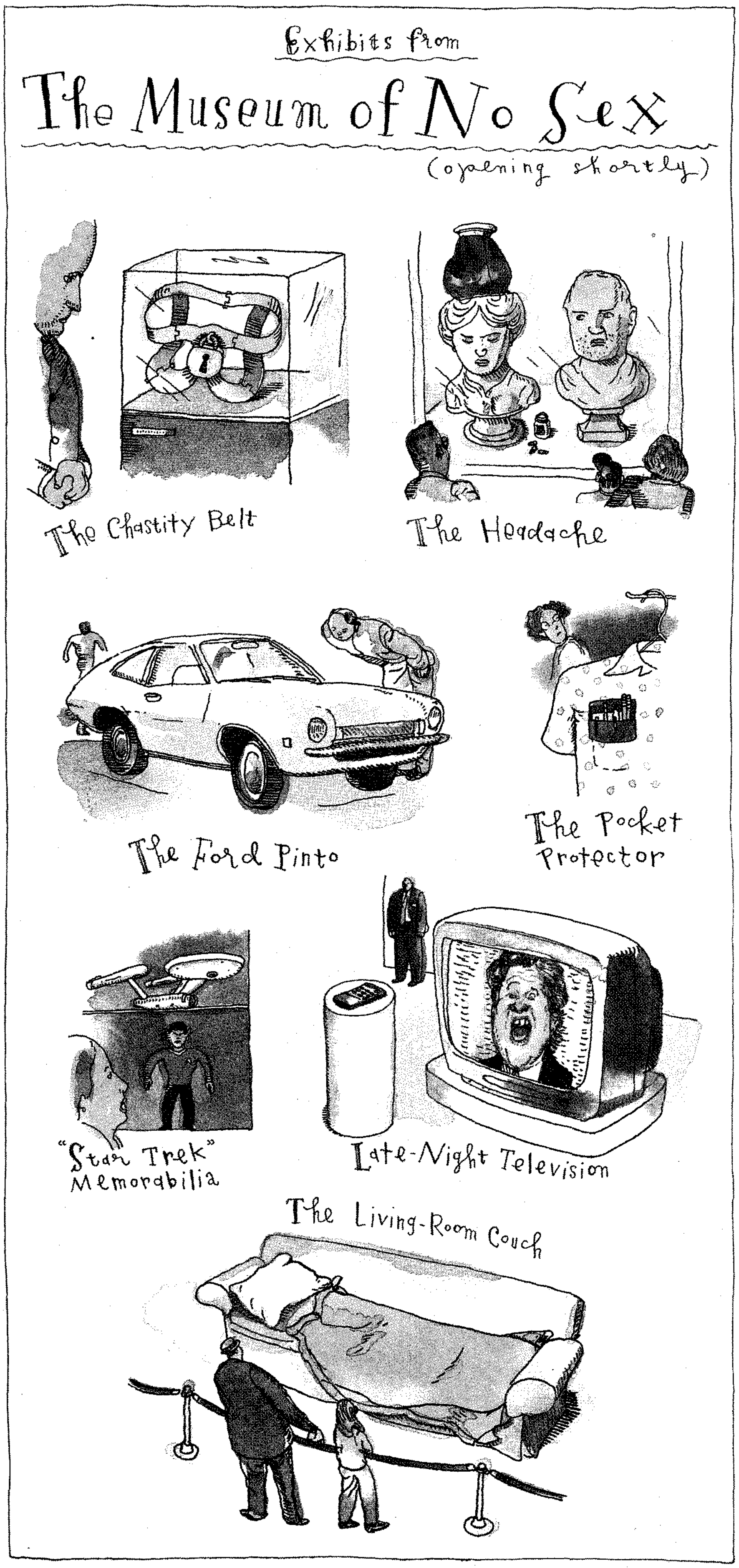
Fifteen or twenty years ago, he realized that he could recall nearly every piece of music he had heard as a child, and that some of it had found its way into his songs, however obscurely. John Lennon once told him that the BBC didn't play rock and roll when he was young, but Radio Caroline, the pirate station in the English Channel, did. "It was so far away," Simon told me, "that the signal would come and go, and the texture of it was something he said he always tried to get into his records." The rhythms of Elvis Presley's version of "Mystery Train" turn up again and again in his own writing, he said, each time differently.

As a singer, Simon is an adept and imaginative phraser, an ability he developed to compensate, he says, "for not having a big voice." What limits most songwriters' melodies, he believes, is the reach of their voices, so he takes singing lessons to extend his range. He says that he knows intuitively when a melody is right, but that he is less confident of his lyrics, which he sometimes asks friends to review. Among his contemporaries in popular music, perhaps only Paul McCartney is his peer as a writer of melodies, just as Bob Dylan and, maybe, James Taylor are his only peers as a lyricist. Writing, as John Cheever somewhere remarks, is not a competitive sport, and songwriting isn't, either. When Simon observes that he wasn't "at the top of the heap," he means that no one ever made a fuss over him the way people did over Dylan and the Beatles. The greatest difference among them, as far as I can tell, is that they matured at different times of their lives. Dylan and Lennon and McCartney did most of their memorable work as young men. Also, as young men they were innovators. Simon became an innovator as an older man. The careers of Dylan and McCartney seem circular, in that they both return to forms they have already made use of. Simon's career seems linear, in that he takes up styles and genres, then discards them, a pattern that he says he learned by observing the career of Miles Davis, with whom he was friends.

All of these artists are musical opportunists. Dylan used Nashville-style country music to present a startling version of himself in the same way that Simon later made use of South African music. As a younger man, Simon sometimes felt overshadowed by Dylan's larger reputation. Dylan's hobo persona, his subversive quality, and his contempt for authority were charismatic. A lot of people made fun of his voice, but nearly everyone agreed that the songs were compelling. Next to him, Simon and Garfunkel seemed polite, studious, and eager to please—college boys. The best of their music was pretty to listen to and sometimes, as with "Bridge Over Troubled Water," had emotional force. Dylan's



"Wow! That was a classic nor'easter."



BARRY BLITT

songs made a person feel powerful. Since "Graceland," though, comparisons between Simon and Dylan no longer sensibly apply or take into proper account the distinctive merits of two maverick artists.

Simon's close friend Lorne Michaels, who has known him for thirty years, told me, "Since I met Paul, he's been saying that he's getting out of show business." When I asked Simon if that was so, he said, "I always ask myself when I start something, 'Is this what you want to do?' I recorded when I was fifteen or sixteen, and the record was a hit. So I was in show business. I was in the world of records at a very young age. I was already becoming what I am. Basically, what I'm doing is an idea conceived by a thirteen-year-old. And I often think, You can review that idea, because it was a thirteen-year-old who thought it up. And I do review it, but I still like it."

Simon is sixty-one. He was born on October 13, 1941, in Newark, New Jersey, but he grew up in Kew Gardens, Queens. He lived with his father and mother and younger brother in an attached house in a row of identical houses. His father, Louis, who is no longer alive, sometimes drove into the wrong driveway. "How you supposed to tell these places apart?" he would ask. Simon's mother, Belle, was a schoolteacher, who quit working to bring up Simon and his younger brother, Eddie, a former musician; he now helps handle his brother's business. Louis Simon was a professional musician; he played the upright bass. For a while, he was a member of studio bands that worked for the television personalities Arthur Godfrey and Garry Moore. Simon and his brother would occasionally stay up late so that they could see their father when the camera showed the band. Louis also led his own bands, and for twenty-five years he had a job on Thursday afternoons at Roseland, where the other band on the bill played Latin music. When he was in his fifties, he grew tired of the musician's life and went back to school. He got a doctorate in linguistics and became a professor at City College.

In grade school, Simon heard Arthur Garfunkel, the son of a travelling salesman, sing at a school assembly. Observing the impression that Garfunkel's performance made on everyone, he decided that he wanted to be a singer, too. In the sixth grade, they were in "Alice in Wonderland" together—Garfunkel was the Mad Hatter, Simon was the White Rabbit. Simon's father gave him a guitar and showed him some chords. Simon used to sit in the bathroom with the lights off and turn on the water and play; he liked the reverberation against the tiles. The first lines of "The Sound of Silence" ("Hello darkness my old friend / I've come to talk with you again") invoke the experience. By the time Simon was twelve or thirteen, he was writing songs, and he and Garfunkel were singing together. They were fourteen when they began looking up record companies in the Yellow Pages and trying to arrange auditions. Most of the companies were boss-and-a-secretary outfits in the Brill Building, at 1619 Broadway, where Simon now has his office. One day in 1956, when they were fifteen, they were recording a demo and a man named Sid Prosen, standing in the hallway outside the studio, heard them and signed them up. As Tom & Jerry, they recorded a song they had written called "Hey, Schoolgirl," and Prosen released it on the Big Record label, with a song of Simon's called "Dancin' Wild" on the B side. The magazine *Cashbox* picked "Hey, Schoolgirl" as its Sleeper of the Week, and said, "This debut by the vocal duo looks as if it is going to make a strong bid to give the boys and the Big Label an initial high chart run. On the 'Hey, Schoolgirl!' session, the stuff of which hit teen pressings are made, the up-tempo 'Hey, Schoolgirl' has its setting in the classroom. Tom & Jerry, with some vocal resemblance to the Everly Brothers, get the tune off invitingly. 'Dancin' Wild' is a lively issue highlighted by the twosome's bright harmony."

Prosen paid Alan Freed, the most popular disk jockey in the city, to play the record, and it sold a hundred thousand copies. For nine weeks, it was one of *Billboard's* Top 100, and in New York it was in the Top Ten. Tom & Jerry performed "Hey, Schoolgirl" on "American Bandstand," and the show's panel of three couples gave it a score of ninety-five, saying that it was great to dance to. (Simon: "Actually, I noticed when they said that, it wasn't.") He and Garfunkel were sixteen when the record came out and, because both had skipped grades, they were seniors in high school. "American Bandstand" 's other guest was the manic rockabilly singer Jerry Lee Lewis. When Garfunkel and Simon went into the dressing room, Lewis was leaning into the mirror and combing his hair. He ignored them, and they found him daunting. "I think it was the tough blondness of it," Simon told me. "All the tough guys I knew were Italian. He looked dangerous." Some of the money Simon made he saved, and with the rest he bought a red convertible.

After "Hey, Schoolgirl," Tom & Jerry released "That's My Story," which went nowhere. Neither did the two or three records that came after that. They stopped recording. Using names such as Jerry Landis and Tico and the Triumphs, Simon continued to make demos. He also made a record by himself, without telling Garfunkel, which Garfunkel regarded as a betrayal, and for several years they didn't speak to each other.

Simon went to Queens College, where he had a teacher who persuaded him to major in English. ("Otherwise," he says, "I wouldn't have known what to do.") He graduated, in 1962, and went to Europe and sang on the street. After a few months, he came home, and the next fall he went to law school at Brooklyn College, and more or less flunked out. Crossing a bridge in Kew Gardens, he met Garfunkel, who was now an architecture student. They began singing together again and eventually, in 1964, made a record called "Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M." On it are some folk songs, a Dylan cover, and five songs that Simon wrote, including a version of "The Sound of Silence" on which Simon plays acoustic guitar and another musician plays the upright bass.

The record sold only a few thousand copies, and Simon went abroad again, this time to England, where he worked as a folksinger. While he was there, a producer added electric guitar, electric bass, and drums to "The Sound of Silence," without telling Simon. A few weeks later, performing in Denmark, Simon came across a copy of *Cashbox*. The record was No. 59 on the magazine's chart, with a bullet, meaning that it was rising quickly. Simon told himself, "My life is irrevocably changed." He went back to America. Garfunkel was living with his mother and father. Simon moved into his old room in his parents' house. There wasn't really anything for them to do. In those days, musicians toured mostly with revues, and they weren't members of any. One afternoon, they were sitting in Simon's red convertible, listening to the radio, when the disk jockey played "The Sound of Silence" and said, "No. 1, Simon and Garfunkel," and Simon said, "That Simon and Garfunkel, they must be having a great time."

They made five albums and then, in 1970, they split up, partly because Garfunkel wanted to act in movies. In 1981, they played a reunion concert in Central Park that was attended by half a million people. They considered making another album. Simon was recording the songs for what became "Hearts and Bones." Garfunkel wanted a copy when Simon was done so that he could add his own parts, but Simon wasn't willing to allow him that much control. They gave up the project, and the record, which was released in 1983, became Simon's first commercial failure. When he went to South Africa a year later, to pursue an enthusiasm for African music, he felt that no one was paying any attention to him at all.

The mature period of Simon's work—the songs that use more complicated structures and rhythms, and are written without regard for whether they will be hits—began with "Graceland," the record he made in South Africa. During this time, he stopped writing songs in a conventional manner—that is, by using a guitar or a piano to compose a melody to fit lyrics, or to write lyrics while he played the melody. He abandoned it partly because what he knew about music theory had outgrown what he knew about the guitar. "The amount of information I had as a player hadn't kept up with the melodies and chord structures I could think of," he told me. Also, he said, "what I discovered while making 'Graceland' was a deeper understanding of rhythm. With most music, I just knew it wasn't there—this doesn't have a groove, there's no pocket, it doesn't make you want to move. It could be loud and fast, like punk, but it doesn't make you want to move. The big learning experience from the African musicians, and especially the guitarists, was how do I break down a rhythm and understand its workings, what its effects are derived from, how I might reproduce them, instead of writing something and thinking, That's a good groove. I hope I get another one."

With "Graceland," Simon decided that he would make rhythm the most important consideration, and that he would handle one element of a song at a time. He would begin with what he calls "a rhythmic premise," find music on the guitar to accompany it, record the combination, and, while listening to it, come up with a melody. Finally, he would write words to fit the melody. "If I have the guitar down on a track," he told me, "I can sing a counterpoint to it, I can sing in syncopation. Along the way, I'm going to compose partly intellectually and partly intuitively. I've had people say to me over the last few years 'Why don't you write the way you used to?' and I don't know what they mean. They imagine me sitting in a room with a guitar, strumming a melody."

Simon's next album, "The Rhythm of the Saints," which was made partly in Brazil, was the result of a conversation he had with the Latin musicians Eddie Palmieri and Tito Puente. "I met them at a club downtown called S.O.B.'s," Simon told me. "I went to hear some African bands, it was '87, and they said, 'Well, look, you can't just make one album and leave and turn away. You have to go on now. You've gone to South Africa, which is for voices, but now you have to go where the drum is, to West Africa and Brazil.' "

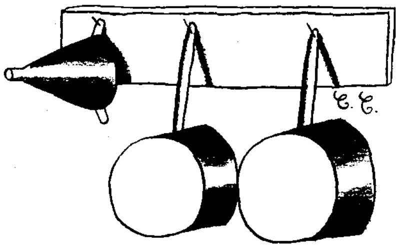
"Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes," the last song written for "Graceland," ends with the South African group Ladysmith Black Mambazo singing to the accompaniment of West African drums. By putting them together, Simon had made a bridge, unconsciously or not, to "The Rhythm of the Saints."

"The other thing that contributed to my going to Brazil was that Milton Nascimento"—the Brazilian musician—"asked me to do a duet. He said he'd send me a couple of songs he was working on—he wanted me to write the words. This was 1988. He sends me two songs, and I pick one. I didn't know what to do, though, because I don't know who I am. He just gave me the 'la la la.' I couldn't imagine what to say, because am I speaking as Milton or am I me? He's Brazilian. If I'm speaking as me, then what am I doing with someone else's music? He sings in a higher register than I do, so to get the sense of it I began to sing a line of harmony underneath his. Anyway, I'm getting nowhere.

"The days go by, so now here comes the week we go to L.A. I'm at the hotel. Milton says, 'What have you got?' I say, 'All I got is I sing along with you on the harmonies.' So I know I'm never going to get it. I think, I'm just going to get on a plane and go home. Then I think, You can't, you have to at least go to the studio and say, 'I'm sorry.' At the studio, Milton writes me out the words phonetically, and I sing them in Portuguese. They say it sounds good. And, well, anyway, there it is. It's done.

"After the session, we're standing in the parking lot, and I say, 'I'm thinking about doing an album about drums, drumming as it goes from West Africa to Brazil to the Caribbean to Cuba and into New Orleans. Milton says, 'I'll help. You come to Brazil, and I'll set you up with musicians.' So I go, in 1989."

The idea that he might write a Broadway musical came to Simon while he was touring in South Africa to promote "Graceland." As he performed with Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, he felt that the pattern of their duets resembled the comings and goings of characters in a show that didn't necessarily have a story but had a theme, and that if he saw such a performance in a theatre he might like it.

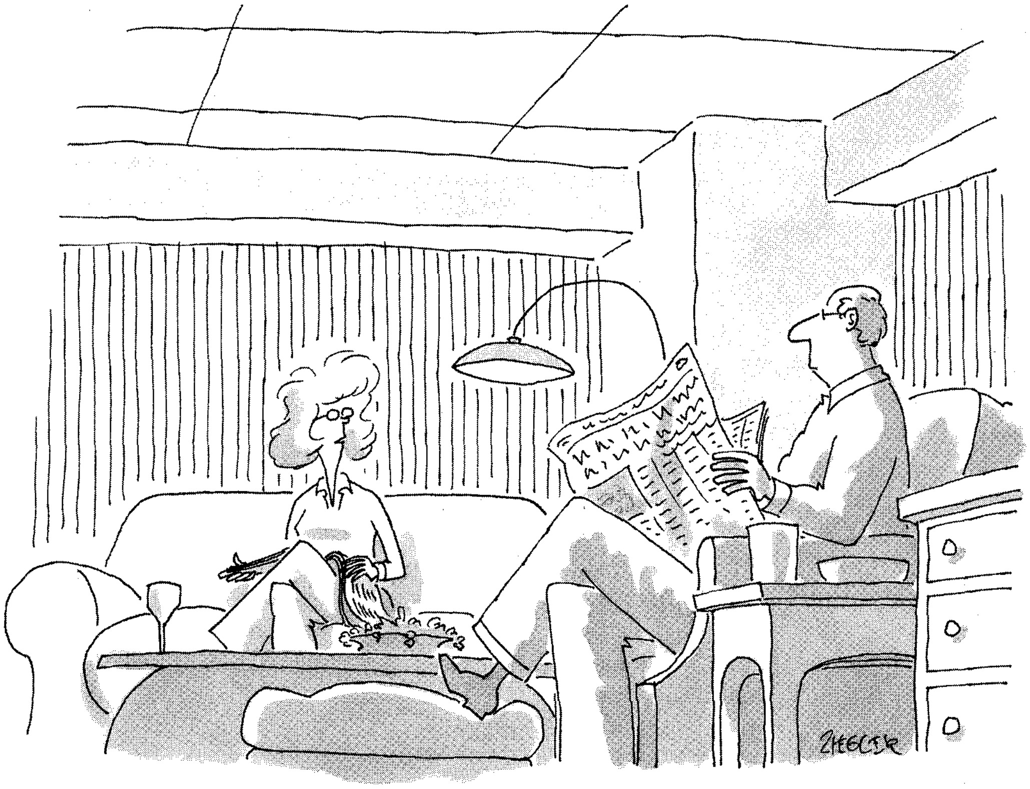


"The Capeman" involves two murders committed in New York in 1959. A sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican named Salvador Agrón stabbed two Irish boys in a gang fight. The people who saw the fight said that the killer wore a black cape. The newspapers called him the Capeman. It took the police three days to find him, and when he was arrested he was defiant. A photograph of him in custody appeared on the front page of the *News*, with the headline "DON'T CARE IF I BURN, SNEERS SLAYER OF TWO."

"The Capeman" is written as if it were meant to be heard on the radio. Instead of the action's unfolding through exchanges among characters, the plot is conveyed mostly through songs. One of them begins, "It was the morning of October 6th, 1960 / I was wearing my brown suit / Preparing to leave the house of D."—D being detention. Simon wrote the story and some of the words with the poet Derek Walcott. Simon feels that he probably wrote the story as if it were a song, and Walcott wrote his part as if it were a poem. The difficulties that the show experienced are well known—it was one of the more prominent Broadway failures of the decade—but they unfortunately overshadowed the music, which is superb. One way of thinking about "The Capeman" is that neither Paul Simon nor Derek Walcott is the equal as a dramatist of Paul Simon the songwriter. Another is to acknowledge the problematic nature of the material. The murders take place in the first act. Nothing that happens after—what became of the Capeman, whether he had an encounter with St. Lazarus or only thought he did, whether he was cursed from childhood, whether his joining the Church was sincere—is as dramatic.

The *Times* reviewer described "The Capeman" as a "sad, benumbed spectacle," which "registers as one solemn, helplessly confused drone." The show closed after sixty-eight performances. My own feeling is that the evening contained one compelling moment—an exchange in a church, during which the Capeman's mother meets the mothers of the victims, asks to be forgiven, and is rebuffed—but that otherwise the narrative was too dreamy, surreal, and diffuse for Broadway. The production probably would have been better received had it played at, say, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where it wouldn't have had to satisfy Broadway expectations. Simon thought that in order for the show to have the authority he wanted it to have he needed the Latin stars Marc Anthony, Ruben Blades, and Ednita Nazario, who were happy to put their other work aside to appear on Broadway, but who he thinks would not have responded to the enticement "Play in Brooklyn!"

Simon was among the investors who lost money on the show. His face during rehearsals was ashen, and his expression was grim. He put on weight from eating out on so many nights, and Marc Anthony, who played the young Salvador Agrón, got him smoking, which he hadn't done since he was a teen-ager. When he sat across from Oprah Winfrey, he could see in her eyes that she thought he looked a lot older than he had the last time she'd seen him.



"All I know is I bought one of Martha Stewart's candles once, and it was lovely."

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The rehearsals for the European tour were held in a room above a rim-and-tire store near the West Side Highway. Simon had engaged eleven musicians—a drummer, a percussionist, a bass player, two guitarists, two keyboard players, a trombone player, a saxophone player, a trumpet player, and a singer to sing in his stead when he needed to listen closely to the band. A second percussionist would be joining them in Europe. Simon has a very intelligent band: there are no charts, every musician remembers his parts, even though since the last tour, a year earlier, he may have worked with dozens of other musicians playing music from all over the world. (For example, Jamey Haddad, one of the percussionists, had just returned from a festival of sacred music in Morocco.) Simon's band is so accomplished, he says, that leading it is like "driving a really expensive race car: if you have the touch, it responds, and if you don't it goes everywhere."

The band's first chair is occupied by the drummer Steve Gadd, who has recorded and performed with Simon for roughly twenty-five years. He is responsible for the strutty little military figure on "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," which, after the drum part in "Wipeout," is perhaps the most widely recognized piece of percussion in popular music. A year ago, Gadd was touring with Eric Clapton, so Simon had to make do with another drummer; he was an excellent drummer—no one gets through the door without having superlative chops—but Simon felt that the band missed Gadd's authority. To compensate, the musicians augmented their parts until the arrangements became too elaborate for Simon's ear. As a tour progresses, musicians, either from enthusiasm, nerves, or inclination, tend to play more. A lot of what Simon hoped to do in rehearsals was strip away parts. "There's always a lot of clutter," he said. "After a while, it gets a little rococo."

The rehearsals began at noon. The room was large and painted black and had windows on two sides. Simon would run through a song from "You're the One" called "Old," which starts with his playing a briskly repeated pattern of simple chords, and the band would join him, and almost immediately he would wave his arms and say, "Does it start like that, with everybody?" Someone would sheepishly say no, actually it starts with the drums, and they would begin again. Or he would address one of the horn players: "You don't have to play the whole phrase. Leave out notes. It's that thing of tricking the ear into hearing what's not there." Or say to a keyboard player, "Drop two notes now and then. Play the shadow of it, so that we don't get too accustomed to it." Or tell the saxophone player, "Growl it, but stick it into the blend. Let's see if it works," and when the horn player did what Simon wanted Simon shrugged and said, "Too staccato. Lazy it up."

One day, he had an idea for a section toward the end of "The Coast," from "The Rhythm of the Saints." The lyrics describe a funeral in "the harbor church of St. Cecilia." On the record, the section passes without any elaboration, but a part for a brass trio had lately suggested itself to Simon. After he taught it to the horn players by singing it to them, and they played it a few times without satisfying him, he said, trying to be helpful, "My original idea was that it was supposed to sound like a Salvation Army band. Or maybe New Orleans." He sat down on a folding chair and tipped the front legs off the floor. He was wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap, and the gesture made him look like a testy schoolboy. The horns played the section again. It still didn't strike him as apt. He walked over and sang into the ear of the trombone player. The musician, who was taller, bent to him as if he were listening to a secret. The musicians tried again, and this time Simon told them, "That sounds fine to me." The entire band played the song from the beginning, but when they came to the new part Simon waved his hands and said to the trombone player, "I think you come in too soon. And you should come in with a big slide."

"Go Dixieland, man," someone said.

Simon shook his head. "It's a funeral procession," he said.

The band had been at work, with a short break, for about six hours. "You're actors at this point," Simon told them wearily. "You're playing guys in a funeral procession. You're not you, you're just guys."

Then he sat down. "I don't know what's happened," he said. "Everything seems to have fallen apart." The musicians offered explanations. Simon stood up and listened to them. Then he turned his back to them, sat down again, and began absently playing his guitar.

To the last rehearsal I attended Simon brought his nine-year-old son, Adrian, a skinny little bristly-haired, red-headed boy. Adrian went around the room talking to all the musicians and having them show him things. His father stood at the front of the room, drinking coffee. The band worked through "The Coast" again. Simon had written a new guitar part for himself and wanted to try it out. "Fourteen years I've played this song," he said, "and I finally figured out the guitar part." Then they moved on to "Slip Slidin' Away," which has a part for a vocal quartet. Simon collected Jay Ashby, the trombone player, Tony Cedras, one of the keyboard players, and Mark Stewart, the second guitar player, to run through it with him. The three of them stood in a half circle, facing Simon, to sing. Cedras is a tall, thin South African with dreadlocks to his waist. He held a cardboard coffee cup in one hand and tapped time on the bottom of it with the fingers of his other hand. Stewart has long red hair, which he piled on top of his head and held in place with a chopstick, like a geisha. The other musicians sat in a lounge outside the room, having the conversation they always seemed to have, about computers. Adrian sat among them.

ALADDIN AND THE DISAPPOINTING LAMP
Look, pal – it's the tote bag or the T-shirt. Take your pick.
I'VE SEEN THE GENIE
I'VE SEEN THE GENIE

Two and three at a time, the musicians filed back into the room. Simon was at the microphone, ready to begin. When Adrian appeared, Simon said, "Adrian, what are you doing? You O.K.? You're not smoking, are you? 'Cause that is the smokers you're hanging with." Adrian grinned and went off to sit next to Jamey Haddad, the percussionist. The song took quite some time to work out. Adrian came over and lay down on the floor by his father, his head resting against a speaker. He sang along, grimacing like a blues shouter on the high notes. "Slip Slidin' Away" includes the lines "I know a father who had a son / he longed to tell him all the reasons for the things he'd done." When it arrived, Adrian fell silent and looked up into his father's face. Haddad knocked over a cymbal, which fell to the floor. Simon stopped singing, and the band came to a halt. "That's nice," he said. "It's different. It's unusual." He took a sip of coffee. "Keep it," he said, putting down the coffee cup, "but make it sound like an accident."

Later that evening, I talked to Simon on the phone. "I didn't get much sleep last night," he said. "The words are starting to come—they woke me up at six. Usually, when the words come in the middle of the night, I think, I'll remember that, but I thought this time it was important to get up and write them down. And when I actually woke up I didn't remember any of them. I don't know what they are, probably not important." I could hear him turning pages.

"After I put the pen down and went back to bed, more came," he said. "In fact, the story came. I don't know the whole thing, and I don't know if it fits anything I'm writing. To me, it's an example of nothing but that the process has taken hold. It's waking me up—which is a good sign."

Then he said that he had written a third piece of music. "It feels like it has fallen into a title," he said. "The rhythm of the notes is exactly 'Once Upon a Time,' a slow, descending line. Whether it's called that later, I don't know. It's usable now. The story had a guy like the guys I knew when I was growing up in Queens. So my mind is going click, click, with these rhymes, and I can see every scene."

He paused and then he said, "Anyhow, I wake up and I say, 'So I was born in the city of Newark, but as soon as I could talk I expressed a preference for New York'—Newark, New York, a rhyme. 'So I'm a talker-slash-New Yorker. I'm meeting a guy from Queens. Not a borough with a great name, blah, blah, blah.' I don't know what this is all about. 'Terrorists and tumors,' I don't know, terrorists and tumors and I have rumors, tumors—I became stuck for a rhyme—and then I thought, Oh, no, no, no, I have baby boomers. I figure, this guy's going to get on the cell phone, and he's going to hear a voice—it's going to be the voice of God—so the language will have to change. I'm not sure how I'll do it, but it's an interesting story. Maybe it won't be an interesting story, who knows?"

The extension he keeps for his family and his closest friends began to ring. "I have to take this," he said. "It might be my wife calling."

While I waited, I thought about the man hearing the voice of God on his cell phone, and the reprimand that Simon had received from the Old Testament figure.

When Simon came back on the line, he said, "Anyway, it involves that device of letting the mind go effortlessly into a character and then turning at an unexpected point. So it's begun."

Because I asked him to, he read some entries from his lyric book. "This is from my books for 'You're the One,' " he said. "Here's a line: 'The ocean and the atmosphere, clouds on fire, pay dirt, dancing DNA, wake up, don't sleep, get out of the way.'

" 'Star quilt,' " he continued. "That became 'quilt of stars.' 'If I was a guitar I wouldn't play that song'—didn't use it. 'Sage and sweet grass'—used it. 'Guru in the morning, bored by the afternoon, fool by sunset'—nope."

I asked what kind of book he wrote in.

"A loose-leaf binder," he said, "so I can tear the pages out. People always give me these handbound leather books, and I can't ever write in them. They're too perfect. It's a presumption to try."

When Simon and his wife got back from their trip to Venice, he and I and Angel Aponte went to the game, at Yankee Stadium. Simon seemed subdued. In the car, he handed Aponte a CD, a recording of him playing a slow and spare chordal figure—the third fragment.

"It's beautiful," I said.

"It took me all day."

"It's so clean."

"That's what took me all day. Anyway, I wanted to get one more tune started before I went out on tour, and this is the one."

It was a cool, windy evening and every now and then programs and newspapers blew across the infield. Simon took a liking to a little Latino boy who was sitting with his mother in the row in front of us. She looked to be about twenty-five. When Simon heard the boy ask for some ice cream and his mother say that she didn't want to leave the game, Simon told her, "I'll go." She appeared not to know who he was; at least, she hadn't paid much attention to him earlier, except to give him the smile a mother gives a mild-looking guy who is being nice to her child. They left and were gone longer than the errand seemed to require. The mother turned in her seat to look for them. Aponte said, "It's all right," and she, not especially reassured, said, "I only have the one." When they got back, Simon told her that the ice-cream machine closest to our seats was broken, so they had gone to another. A few people approached Simon and asked if he would sign their programs or let them take his picture, and he said, "Can we do it after the game?" At the end of the game, the crowd pressed in upon him so avidly that no one could get a picture anyway. When someone asked for one, he said, "Oh, I don't really like pictures. Do you?"

Outside the stadium, Simon's car had been delivered to the curb. While we were waiting on Frederick Douglass Boulevard for a light to change, I turned to ask Simon a question and was brought up short when his arm shot to his armrest and his tinted window began lowering. He stared straight ahead, his face composed in its customary deadpan expression. I had no idea what he was doing. Next to us was a small car with all the windows open. The driver was a man who looked West Indian; at least, he had long dreadlocks, and so did the man next to him. Each of them had an unlit cigarette between his lips and neither of them moved. They paid no attention to us, and Simon appeared to be paying no attention to them. Then I realized that he was listening closely to the music coming from the speakers in their car. It sounded like single-chord reggae in a minor key, but the singer chanted more than sang, and the melody was mournful and Eastern-sounding.

"Jamaican," Simon said. Then, "Maybe it's not Jamaican. It's almost Arabic-sounding." His head moved slightly with the rhythm. The light changed, and the other car took off ahead of us. Simon hummed the melody. "It really had an African sound to it," he said. He raised his window. Then, his tone downcast, "I understand that sound—the pulse—you got to go out and dance. More people probably want to do that than listen to me explore the further ranges of my songwriting."

"Well, anyway, you're past the crisis point," I said. "The work's under way."

"I would say so," he said. He hummed the melody softly. He looked out the window. "There's nothing you can do if you don't have the confidence," he said. "You really have to believe it. And when you believe it's extraordinary—well, even if it isn't, just the pleasure of belief . . ." He completed the remark with the slightest of shrugs. ♦

LETTER FROM IRAQ

NO PLACE TO HIDE

Travels through a terrorized land.

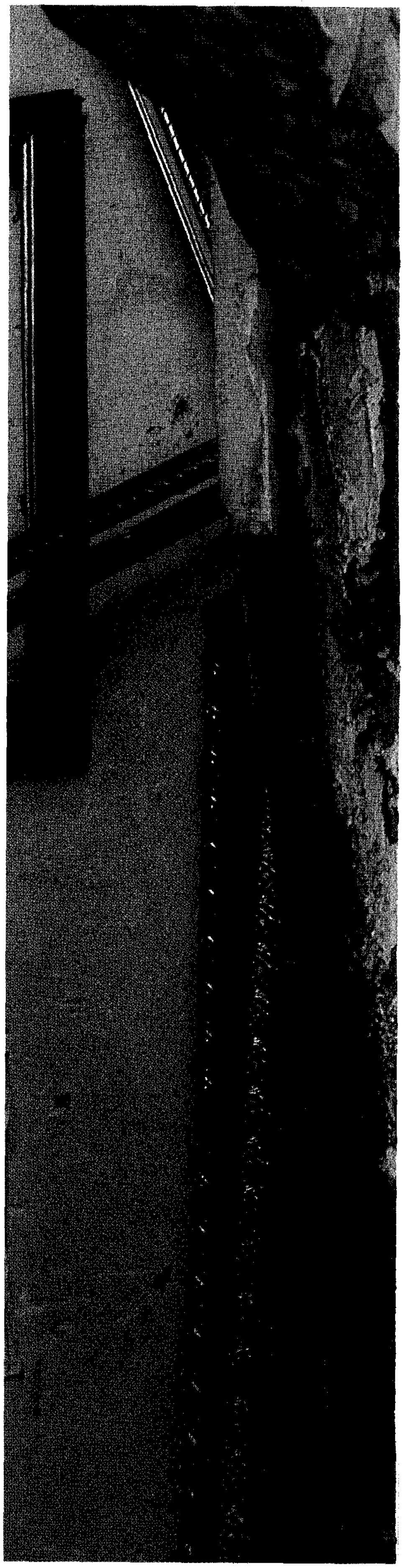
BY JON LEE ANDERSON

The land around the Abu Ghraib prison, twenty miles west of Baghdad, is barren and dusty. Run-down garages and grubby car-repair shops line the road near the prison's main gate, which is within sight of the grand highway that Saddam Hussein built across Iraq in the early nineteen-eighties. Abu Ghraib is the biggest prison in the country. Until recently, it housed maybe fifty thousand men, although to my knowledge there are no official figures on this. Iraqis told me that it was a "countless" number, or many, many thousands. Quite a few of the prisoners were political detainees, and over the years human-rights organizations have reported that mass executions took place there regularly. I met a man in Jordan, an Iraqi in self-imposed exile, who said that a friend of his had been incarcerated in Abu Ghraib. The friend told him that every Wednesday was execution day at the prison. An old-fashioned Indian hanging machine had been used for a while, but a problem had arisen with noise. There was a terrific banging sound every time the machine dropped a body, and people living near the prison had begun keeping track of the executions by counting the bangs. The old gallows was replaced by a quiet modern device, but the locals still knew when executions were taking place because the condemned men ululated as they went to their deaths. "In our culture, this is something that only women do, when they are happy," the Iraqi exile said. "But the men in Abu Ghraib make the sound because they are so relieved that they are finally going to die."

In mid-October, a few days after Saddam received a hundred per cent of the vote in a referendum on his leadership, all the foreign journalists in Baghdad that the Ministry of Information could round up joined a convoy of vehicles headed for Abu Ghraib. We hadn't been told what was going on, but as we raced out of town the voice of the information minister came on the radio, announcing that Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council had issued a general amnesty. When we got to the main entrance of the prison, within an hour, relatives and friends of the prisoners were already starting to congregate. They were dancing and waving their arms and chanting hysterically, "*Na'am, na'am na'am*"—"Yes, yes yes, to our beloved leader Saddam Hussein, We give our lives and blood for you." Some of them shouted "Down Bush!" Men were beating on drums, and one man shot a Kalashnikov into the air. A flatbed truck carrying a green cylindrical tube about the size of a Scud missile moved along the road outside the prison walls, but nobody seemed to notice.

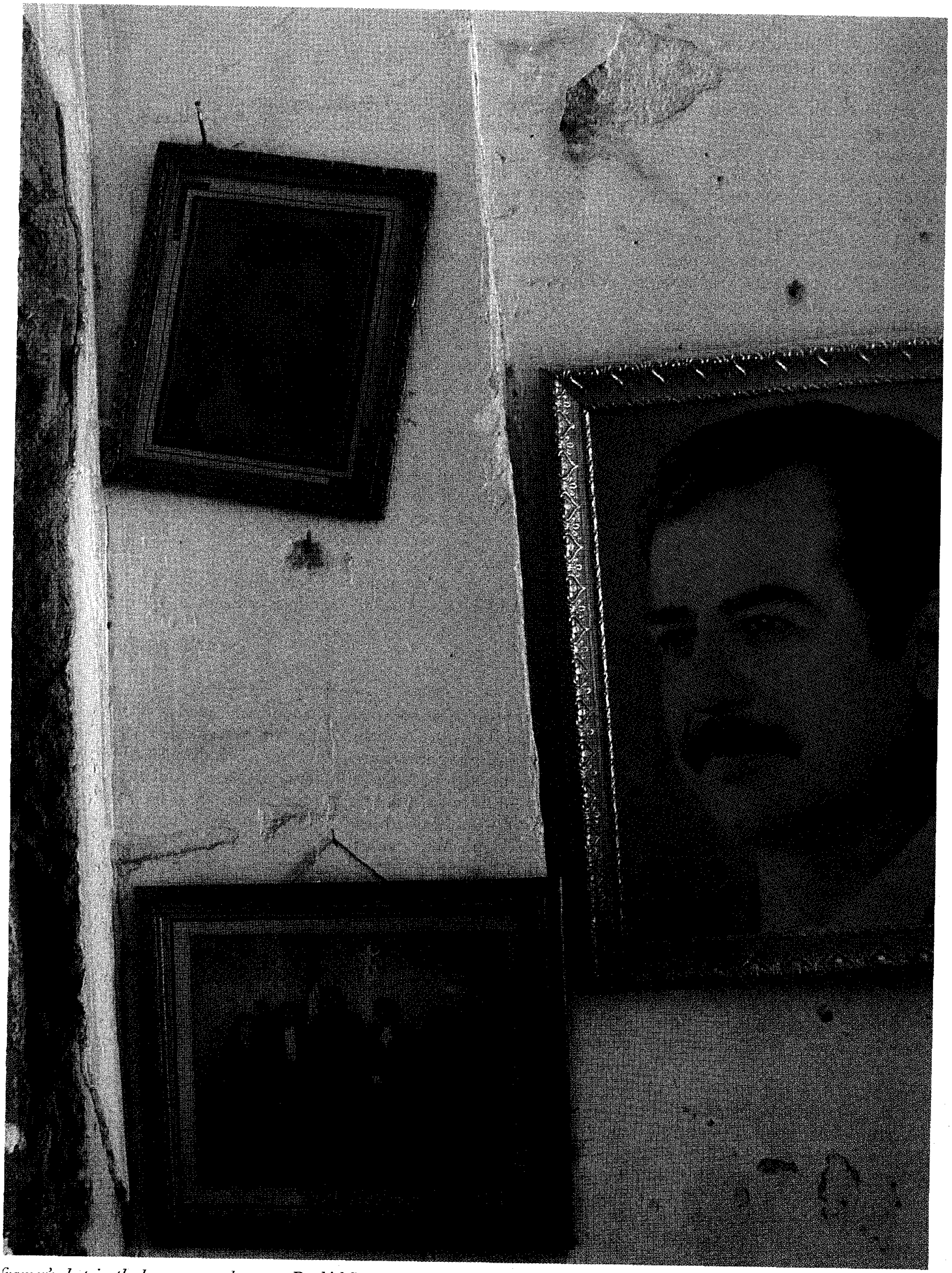
The mob soon overcame the guards who had been trying to keep control of the gates, and I was swept into Abu Ghraib with everyone else. We entered a vast space filled with rubbish and mounds of earth and open holes. The crowd headed toward blocks of cells several hundred yards away, yelling and chanting. Seagulls wheeled above us, and there was a repulsive stench in the air. As we drew near the barracks of the prison, the stench intensified. Gaunt men wearing soiled *dish-dashes*, the traditional Iraqi men's robe, were coming out of the cellblock area, holding bundles of clothing. Some of them were accompanied by healthy-looking people who wept and kissed and embraced them. A man passed me carrying a younger man who was ashen and apparently so debilitated that he could not walk.

We tumbled through an arched, tunnel-like entrance in a wall at the end of the great plaza of dirt, into another open space, this one a small rectangle of filth surrounded by more walls, with caged entrances that led to the cellblocks. Men and boys ran across the yard and climbed onto roofs and tore aside



Portraits of Saddam Hussein and Jesus hang

MAGNUM



ramer's shop in the bazaar area between Rashid Street and the Tigris River in central Baghdad. Photograph by Thomas Dworzak.

loops of razor wire to get inside. A few guards waved their arms and screamed things in Arabic that I couldn't understand. I saw the source of the stench: a spectacular mound of garbage that must have been accumulating for years. Human shit clung like caked mud to the razor wire outside the bars of the cells, and more shit lay in piles everywhere. As I stood watching, an Italian reporter for RAI television, a blond woman I had met in Baghdad, came up to me. Her cameraman had been swept away by the mob, and she was on her own, wearing skintight white Armani jeans and a white polo shirt. She said that she needed my help. An Iraqi official in plainclothes told me to get her out of there. Several excited young men had crowded around us and were laughing and pointing. The woman held on to my belt and I guided her through the crowd, assisted by the official, who tried to clear the way for us. Now and then, some of the men moved closer and I could feel the woman flinch as they grabbed her. "I guess it wasn't a good day to wear Armani," she said.

We got back to the tunnel-like entrance just as the guards had managed to chase most of the men from the roofs and were clearing the area. I didn't want to go into the tunnel, which had become something of a gauntlet, and the guards and I were shoving one another back and forth over this issue when a pickup truck with a couple of soldiers in the back drove up. I forced my way onto it, with the Italian woman still attached to me, and the driver of the pickup accelerated and braked his way crazily through the archway. One of the soldiers made us get off at the other side, and a minute or two later, after more scuffling, we had disentangled ourselves from the mob and were back in the great open space, where hundreds of bewildered men were moving toward the open gates of the entrance.

An ethnic Turkoman from the city of Kirkuk, a strong-looking man dressed in a shabby robe, stood calmly among the reunited relatives and prisoners, wearing a dreamy smile, his small cloth bundle of prison gear at his feet. Saddam has been systematically cleansing the area around Kirkuk of Kurds and Turkomans for several years. Human Rights Watch reports that nearly a hundred thousand people in the region have been deported and their land given to Arabs. The Turkoman said that he was forty-three years old, although he looked at least ten years older. He had spent the last eleven years in Abu Ghraib, where he had been serving a twenty-year sentence on charges of spying for Turkey. I asked him what his plans were. "To go home," he said. How did he feel? His smile broadened: "Wonderful." He lifted his eyebrows and added, "Thank you, Saddam Hussein."

We pushed our way out of the prison and found my car and driver. By that time, there was a huge traffic jam, and it was impossible to use the road. People had simply parked their cars in both lanes of the two-lane highway and along the shoulders of the road, and cars and trucks were backed up for miles. We drove along in the dirt, away from Baghdad, made a huge loop, and doubled back.

A day or two later, a throng of relatives of prisoners who had not appeared when the prison gates were opened demonstrated in Baghdad, chanting praises of Saddam, but also demanding to know where the missing men were. Flustered officials tried to control journalists' reports about the incident, but CNN went live. The next morning, when the prisoners' relatives tried to demonstrate again, they were dispersed by soldiers. The relatives went away, but they had made their point.

It was understood that Saddam had released the prisoners in order to improve morale in the country, as well as to counteract criticism of his abysmal record of human-rights abuses, but, still, the response of the people did not seem clear. Not long after the families' demonstration, I met with an influential Iraqi under circumstances that were unusually free of oversight, and I asked him to explain why political prisoners emerging from years of confinement in Abu Ghraib would, apparently spontaneously, shout praises to Saddam, and why the relatives of the disappeared also praised him. Our conversation was unexpected, since I had become used to

SNAIL REVISITED

I want to say   everything there is to say   about you
how you slept   on the ceiling of a plastic salad box
how   sometimes   one eye tentacle   swivelled & stretched
looking   updown   northsouth   eastwest   your eye
meeting mine   curiously   the other   a separate sleepy creature
slow to wake   & follow   the effect   extraterrestrial
once   late at night   the house so still   I heard a sound
it was you   ravenous   unstoppable   eating a carrot strip
I confess   I too   have known such hunger
you were companionable   undemanding   but in December
you died without   ceremony   for days I wasn't sure
I waited for you to resume   movement   to climb clear walls
to eat your lettuce   but No   you were dead
& I   pallbearer of one   carried you   outside
where no sun wind rain   could restore you   the worst
I won't tell   (what Death will do to the body)   finally
you were only   a shell   a monument   a memory
I buried in the herb garden   where your glistening minerals
leach into dark soil   & now   I want to know:
what is your shape   & *where is your spirit?*
are you leafy?   *fragrant?*   *do you flower?*
a balm to butterfly & bee?   *then go to seed?*
time passes   it is midsummer   & I am alive
& done with Death   until the next time   it happens

—*Elizabeth Spires*

having an official government minder along—a "guide" from the Ministry of Information, whose job it was to help solicit official interviews, sit in on them, take notes, and report back, presumably, about me. When I journeyed outside Baghdad, I was accompanied not only by the guide (an amiable man named Ahmed who spoke no English and execrable Spanish, the language we communicated in) but also by an agent of the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret police.

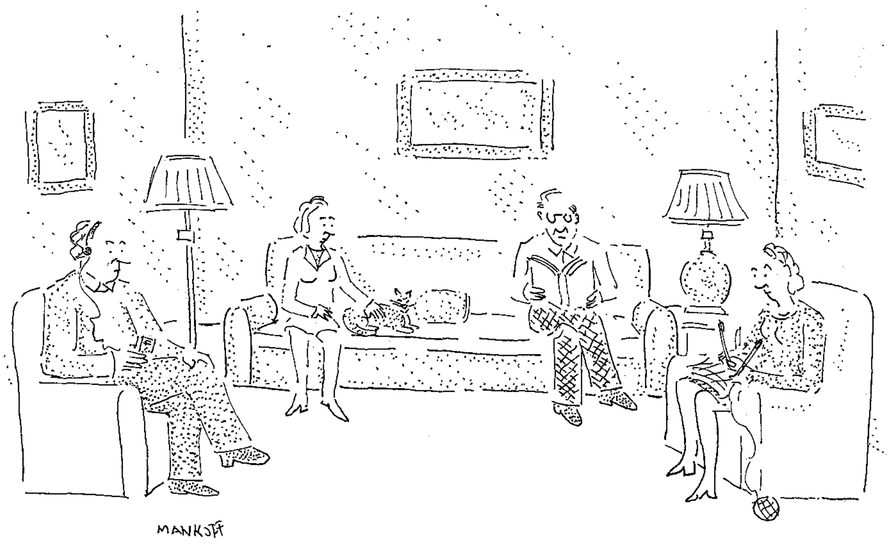
"You call these things a riddle," my influential source said, "and I guess that is what they are. But you should not expect to hear the truth when you talk to Iraqis. There is a great deal of fear among people in Iraq, and for very good reasons." Before we parted, the man—who is someone who actually sees Saddam fairly regularly—gave me a piece of advice that seemed straight out of "Alice in Wonderland": "Listen closely to the people, and judge for yourself. But remember, the truth is to be found in what they *don't* say."

Much blood has been spilled defending Iraq from foreign marauders (Alexander the Great, Trajan, Hulagu Khan, the Ottomans, the British), and the Iraqi national psyche is perhaps understandably paranoid. That tendency, along with the obsessive cult of personality of Saddam Hussein, makes for a society with curious disconnections. A couple of years ago, I visited the holy city of Karbala, about fifty miles southwest of Baghdad, where the custodian of the shrine of Hussein, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, received me for tea in the grand, gold-leafed mosque that shelters Hussein's remains. Hussein and his family were massacred in Karbala in the year 680 during a dispute over who was Muhammad's rightful heir, and his death became the defining event in the great schism in Islam, between the Shiites, who accept Hussein's father, Ali, as the legitimate successor, and the Sunnis, who believe that the Prophet was succeeded by Abu Bakr, the first caliph. More than eighty per cent of the Muslims in the world are Sunni, but in Iraq there are more Shiites than Sunnis, and neighboring Iran, of course, is almost entirely Shia.

The custodian, or *sadin*, of the shrine was a corpulent man with a large mustache who sat amiably in a throne-like chair in an air-conditioned room with marble floors and windows that looked onto an interior courtyard. He wore a clerical waistcoat and skirt and a burgundy *tarbouche*—a brimless felt cap—wrapped with a green cloth. As we drank sweet, hot tea, I could see wraithlike women in black robes walking outside in the courtyard and men touching the mirrored gates of the mosque with their fingers. There were three pictures on the walls of the room, hanging in frames: a large photograph of Saddam praying that hung directly above the *sadin's* chair; a photograph of Saddam on a visit to the mosque, surrounded by soldiers; and a colored chart showing Muhammad's family tree. The tree was depicted as a real tree, with many leaves, on which the names of the Prophet's descendants were written. A leaf in the upper left-hand corner was obscured by a circle that contained a portrait of Saddam.

Reproductions of this chart are fairly common in Iraq, and I had seen it before, but I always found it curious, since it purports to link Saddam to Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, around whom the Shiite faith was formed. The ruling Baathist party is composed mostly of Sunni Muslims, and Saddam has virtually disenfranchised the Shiites, particularly since 1991, when, in the wake of the Gulf War ceasefire, a group of Shiite Army officers in southern Iraq led a rebellion against him. The rebellion was crushed in a matter of weeks, and Saddam punished the Shiite community viciously. I mentioned my confusion to the *sadin*, who explained that the stories of problems between Saddam and the Shiites were simply Western propaganda. "The real problem," he said, "is that the United States wants to dominate the oil-producing states of the Gulf, and one of the ways the United States is doing that is by exploiting divisions between ethnicities and sects of the Muslim world."

An ancestral connection between Saddam and the central figure in the Shiite belief system actually has a certain wacky logic, given that Saddam's role in Iraqi life is as an omniscient, irritable, and unpredictable deity. A Western diplomat in Baghdad told me that the results of the referendum to ratify Saddam's popularity were probably genuine. "The people were voting for themselves, for their own security," he said. "They believed that somehow the regime would *know* if they voted against Saddam." Tariq Aziz, Saddam's Deputy Prime Minister, explained to me that it was all about love. "In a Western democracy, there is no love between the people and their leaders," he said. "It's different here. Even children have posters of Saddam Hussein on their bedroom walls. I don't think that in America you have pictures of George W. Bush on your walls. This is a different culture. Iraq is a democracy, although it's not a liberal democracy. But in our own way . . .



BOB + CAROL + TED + ALICE: THE REMAKE

What is the essence of a democracy? A healthy relationship between the people and the government."

A few days after the prisoners were released, I travelled from Baghdad to the southern city of Basra on a vintage Iraqi Airways 727. It was a regular, if unauthorized, flight through the no-fly zone that is enforced by U.S. and British jets. In what has by now become a pro-forma ritual, Iraqi pilots receive radio warnings from their U.S. military counterparts that they are entering forbidden airspace, and they ignore them. The Americans and the British don't do anything further, since the only thing they could do is shoot down the passenger planes.

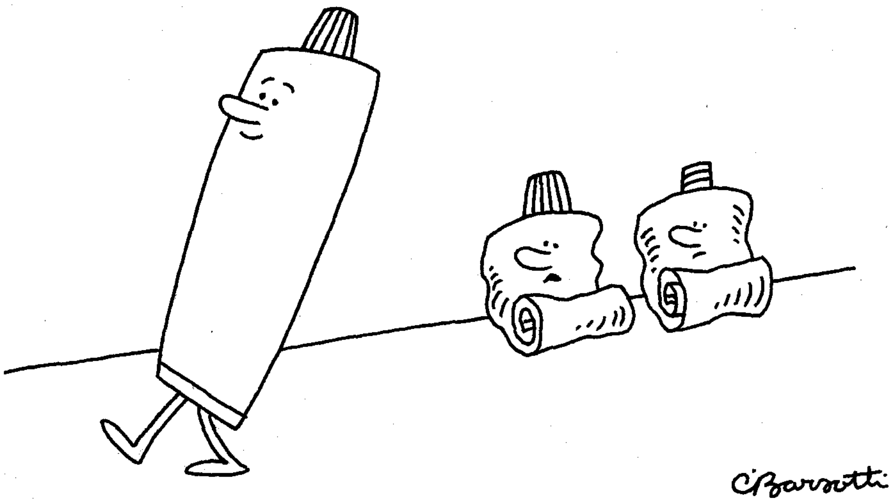
Basra, which was once called the Venice of the Middle East, is a beat-up, sorry-looking town, bisected by trash-strewn roads and canals filled with raw sewage. The city sprawls along the Shatt-al-Arab, the channel that flows from the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates, forty miles upstream, into the Persian Gulf (the "Arab Gulf," to Iraqis). Basra is thirty miles from the border with Kuwait and was on the front line during the war with Iran in the nineteen-eighties, and so has been hit by rockets and bombs repeatedly. Many of the villas on the corniche that runs along the Shatt-al-Arab at the city center are pocked by shellfire and crumbling with neglect. Shortly before I arrived, the radar installations at the airport were bombed by a no-fly-zone patrol. The first morning I was in town, an air-raid siren honked rhythmically throughout the city for several minutes, but everyone ignored it, and no jets appeared overhead. Ahmed, the minder, explained that the sirens go off whenever Iraqi airspace is penetrated, not just when U.S. or British fighters bomb or strafe targets nearby.

The unpatched hole in the sidewalk in front of the Basra Sheraton is in a starburst pattern, indicating that it was made by mortar fire. The hotel still bears the logo of the international chain, although it lost its franchise long ago. The Sheraton's décor is left over from the seventies, as are its brochures, which depict heedless Western tourists frolicking in the swimming pool and dancing in the hotel night club. There were few guests when I was there—just some Iraqi military officers, a Gulf Arab or two, and the odd Russian. Across the street from the hotel, and extending for several hundred metres along the waterfront, is a line of perhaps two dozen bronze statues on plinths, in memory of Iraqi officers killed during the Iran-Iraq war. The right arms of the statues are extended and point accusingly toward the Iranian frontier. A statue of Saddam, which is larger than the others, stands at one end of the corniche. It also gestures toward Iran. The statues had faded to a dusty green, but workers were applying fresh coats of black paint to them, and by the time I left they were gleaming.

My escort from the Mukhabarat, a dark-skinned and muscular Bedouin who told me to call him Lion, accompanied me on a drive into the marshlands, or what is left of them, north of Basra. The marshlands are a sensitive topic in Iraq, almost taboo, and I had stressed that I was interested only in the area's natural beauty and historical significance. We drove for more than two hours to the village of Al-Madina, occasionally passing women walking along the road in black chadors, or children herding water buffalos. Soldiers manned machine-gun nests at every bridgehead. The landscape was tattered and bleak, a salt-encrusted desert leavened occasionally by a few date palms or a copse of bullrushes or a swampy section where stagnant water gathered in pools. As we approached the village, I noticed that the date palms were dead and decapitated, just forlorn wood spikes without leaves, leaning this way and that—the result, Lion told me, of shelling from Iran during the eighties.

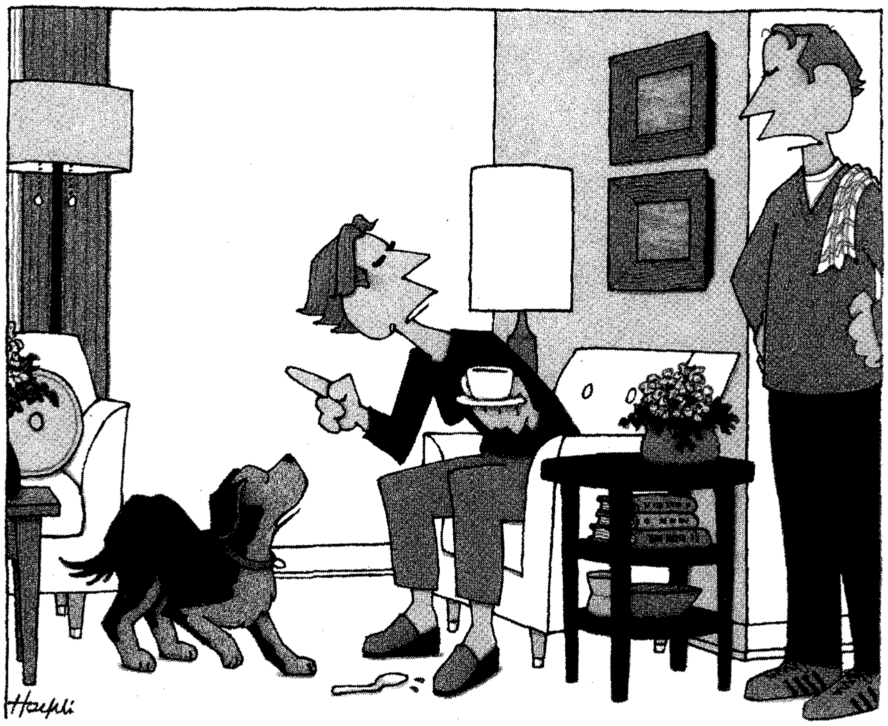
This part of Iraq was once covered by several thousand square miles of wetlands created by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Sumerians, the ancestors of the modern marsh dwellers, controlled the river water with an elaborate irrigation system. The most distinctive aspect of the landscape was vast beds of tall reeds, resembling bamboo, with which the marsh dwellers, a tribe called the Madan, built large, vaulted island houses. Tamarisk trees grew on the banks of the deltas where river water fed into the marshes, and carp and dozens of other types of fish were abundant. There were well over a hundred species of birds, many of them migratory waterbirds who depended on the marshes for refuge in the winter. The Madan raised cattle, sheep, and goats and hunted wild boars.

I learned about this place as a boy, when I read "The Marsh Arabs," a memoir by the British explorer and writer Wilfred Thesiger, who lived in the marshes for several years in the nineteen-fifties. Thesiger, who is still alive, was born and spent his childhood in what was then Abyssinia, where his father befriended Haile Selassie, and he later travelled extensively in Arabia, Afghanistan, and Africa. "Like many Englishmen of my generation," he wrote, "I had an instinctive sympathy with the traditional life of others." He described the marshes of Iraq as a romantic Arcadia: "Memories of that first visit to the Marshes have never left me: fire-



"Kind of sad, really."

light on a half-turned face, the crying of geese, duck flighting in to feed, a boy's voice singing somewhere in the dark, canoes moving in procession down a waterway, the setting sun seen crimson through the smoke of burning reedbeds, narrow waterways that wound still deeper into the Marshes. A naked man in a canoe with a trident in his hand, reed houses built upon water, black, dripping buffalos that looked as if they had calved from the swamp with the first dry land. Stars reflected in dark water, the croaking of frogs, canoes coming home at evening, peace and continuity, the stillness of a world that never knew an engine."



"We haven't been married long enough for you to reprimand my dog."

Needless to say, this world no longer exists. Plans to drain the marshes were already being devised by British engineers in the nineteen-fifties, when Thesiger was there, although the real damage was not done until forty years later. Originally, the idea was to build canals to drain off water that was excessively salty or polluted, and to create more land that could be cultivated. The work progressed slowly, and was delayed further in the eighties, when Iranian forces repeatedly crossed into Iraq and invaded the marshes, which became a war zone. Many of the marsh Arabs, who are Shiites, fought against the Iranian Shiites in the war, and causeways were built so that armored units could maneuver. The marshes remained fairly remote, however, and after the war they became a sanctuary for a large number of deserters from the Iraqi Army.

Thesiger touches on the old problem of the inability of governments to exert control over the marsh dwellers. "The Marshes themselves," he writes, "with their baffling maze of reedbeds where men could move only by boat, must have afforded a refuge to remnants of defeated people, and been a centre for lawlessness and rebellion, from earliest times. Sargon, the great Assyrian king, was defeated by the Chaldeans who lived there. . . . A thousand years later the Marshes were the stronghold of the Zanj, whose rebellion threatened the very existence of the Abbasid Caliphate. Innumerable slaves, mostly of African descent, had been used to drain the Marshes around Basra. Treated with unspeakable brutality, they revolted, killed their guards, and terrorized the neighborhood."

In "Iraq: Thirty Years of Progress," a sympathetic account of the Baathist party's first three decades in power, written in 1998 by Naji Sabri Al-Hadithi, who is now Saddam's foreign minister, the draining of the marshes is subsumed in an account extolling the construction of an immense canal known as the Saddam River. "In the 1990's, under the harsh economic hardships of the blockade or sanctions," Al-Hadithi writes, "Iraqi authorities started with pure Iraqi efforts, potentialities and expertise to implement this giant project. It was completed in record time of 180 days from May 25, 1992, to December 7, 1992, when it was inaugurated by President Saddam Hussein." What is not explained is that this project was essentially an exercise in genocide against the marsh Arabs, in retaliation for the Shiite uprising against Saddam in the days following the ceasefire in the Gulf War.

On February 28, 1991, the day the Gulf War ended, a Shiite commander of an Iraqi tank battalion fleeing Kuwait had set off a revolt in Basra, and hundreds of Baathist Party officials, police agents, and Mukhabarat informers were subsequently killed. The intifada was joined by thousands of members of the Badr Brigade, a militia made up of Iraqi refugees, who crossed the border into Iraq from Iran. The militia was led by the Shiite cleric Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, who declared an Islamic republic in Basra. The Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north had been encouraged by the Allies to rise up against Saddam, and they assumed that they would get support for their intifada, but they didn't. For reasons that have never been completely clear, the Americans and the British abandoned the rebels. In mid-March, the Iraqi Army shelled the Shiite shrine in Karbala. The marsh Arabs rebelled in June and they were put down savagely. Villages were bombed and then razed. Several human-rights organizations have reported that napalm and chemical agents were used in the marshes. Lakes were poisoned, killing large numbers of aquatic birds and animals. The reed beds were burned. People were transported to Army camps in the north, where mass executions took place.

Thousands of Shiites, including several leading clerics, were killed outright. Others were arrested and disappeared. For a few years, Shiite rebels kept up a low-level insurgency, using what was left of the marshes as a sanctuary, but they did not survive for long. By 1994, most of the marsh dwellers had been killed or had fled into exile in Iran or moved to the slums of Basra and other Iraqi cities. Estimates of how many people were murdered or displaced vary widely, but the U.S. State Department says that two hundred thousand people out of a population of two hundred and fifty thousand were affected. What had been pristine swampland teeming with birdlife and water buffalos had become the vast baked pan of an empty desert. Today, there is little in the way of a security problem in southern Iraq, because, quite simply, there is nowhere to hide.

Sheikh Rashash, the brother of the paramount chief in the region, was waiting for us in the village of Al-Madina, which consists of several dozen mud houses. The sheikh and several other men greeted us in a *mudhif*, a lofty, arched meeting house made of reeds. Persian carpets lay on the floors, kilim-covered cushions were arrayed along the sides, and lamps hung from the reed rafters. A fireplace with large brass coffeepots had been constructed in the center of the *mudhif*, which was open at both ends and could fit perhaps two hundred people. I got off to a bad start with the sheikh, a big-nosed, beefy man who wore a *dishdash* and a red-and-white checked kaffiyeh headscarf, when I addressed him as “Sheikh” and said that I was pleased to meet a chief of the famous marsh Arabs of Iraq, whom I had read about when I was young. He stood up from his cross-legged position in front of me on the floor and strode purposefully over to the entrance of the *mudhif*. He pointed to a portrait of Saddam hanging above the archway, and boomed out, “There is the sheikh, Saddam Hussein. He is the *rais*”—chief—“of the Arabs, and there are no marshes anymore!”

I decided to let this go, and I asked him how life was different now that the marshes had disappeared. “There is a big difference between then and now,” he replied. “Before, there were no schools and hospitals. Now each town has a school. Before, everyone lived along the river. Before, there were marshes, but the government has drained them. Because this area is very good for oil. Very rich.” Where were the oil rigs? I asked. There were oil wells, he said, waving toward the distance. “It’s beginning now. There are seventy-six oil wells.” I told him I had heard that the marshes were cleared because of conflict, not to drill for oil. His eyes narrowed, and he shot a look at Ahmed, my guide, and Lion, the Mukhabarat man, and said something to them in Arabic. Then he turned back to me, grinning. “This is wrong,” he said. “The people are living better than they were before. I speak very clearly for you.”

I tried a different tack. “Are the people happy about the marshes being gone?” I asked. The sheikh waved at the men in the *mudhif*, who were staring at me without expression. “Look at these people. They are healthy, and happy, whether the marshes are gone or not gone. Don’t worry about it. Before, people only had small boats. Now they have cars. Now the people work making bricks, in agriculture, and as taxi-drivers.”

I asked him what he felt about the results of the recent referendum and the prisoner release. He said that he had killed two water buffalos and made a special lunch to celebrate the referendum and then had thrown a larger feast for the men who returned to the area from jail. Giving feasts, settling local disputes, and providing food for the poor were the duties of sheikhs, he explained. They were hereditary rulers, although they could lose their jobs if they were “bad.” Had any of the returning men been in prison for political crimes? I asked. “It included every kind of person,” he said. “Now everyone must just think about family, and children, and work. Anyone who has been in jail would have to be crazy to return.”

Hoping to escape the conversation in the *mudhif*, which made me feel claustrophobic, I asked the sheikh if there were still any of the old boats around that I might be able to see. He shook his head. “Everyone has cars now. They are better.” He paused and stared hard at me for a moment and then he said, “Wasn’t it like this in America once? We all change. Maybe in ten more years this”—he waved up at the beautiful reed structure—“will not be reeds but glass, like in America! There people came from the wilderness, too, but now

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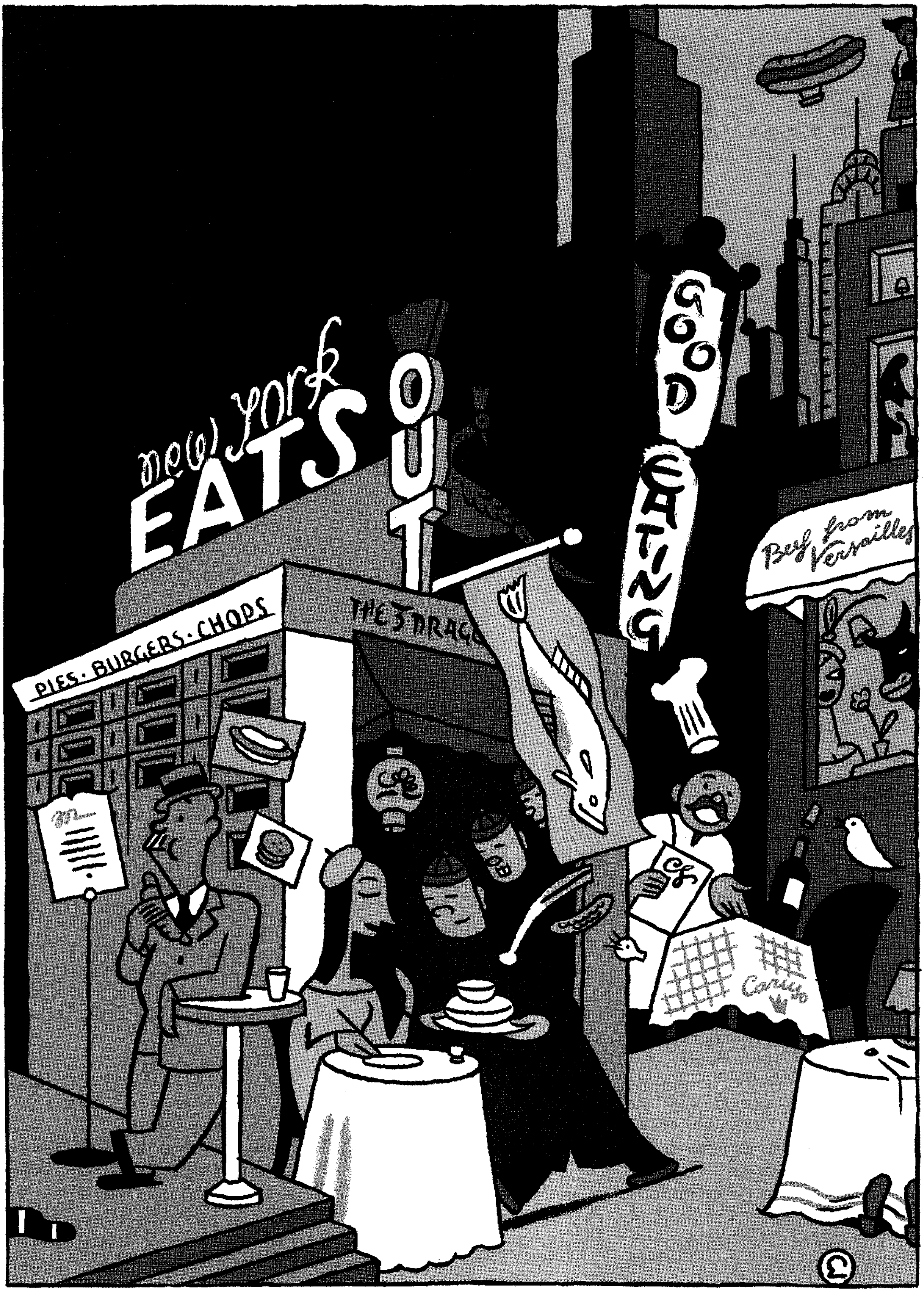
AT THE GALLERIES

À LA CARTE

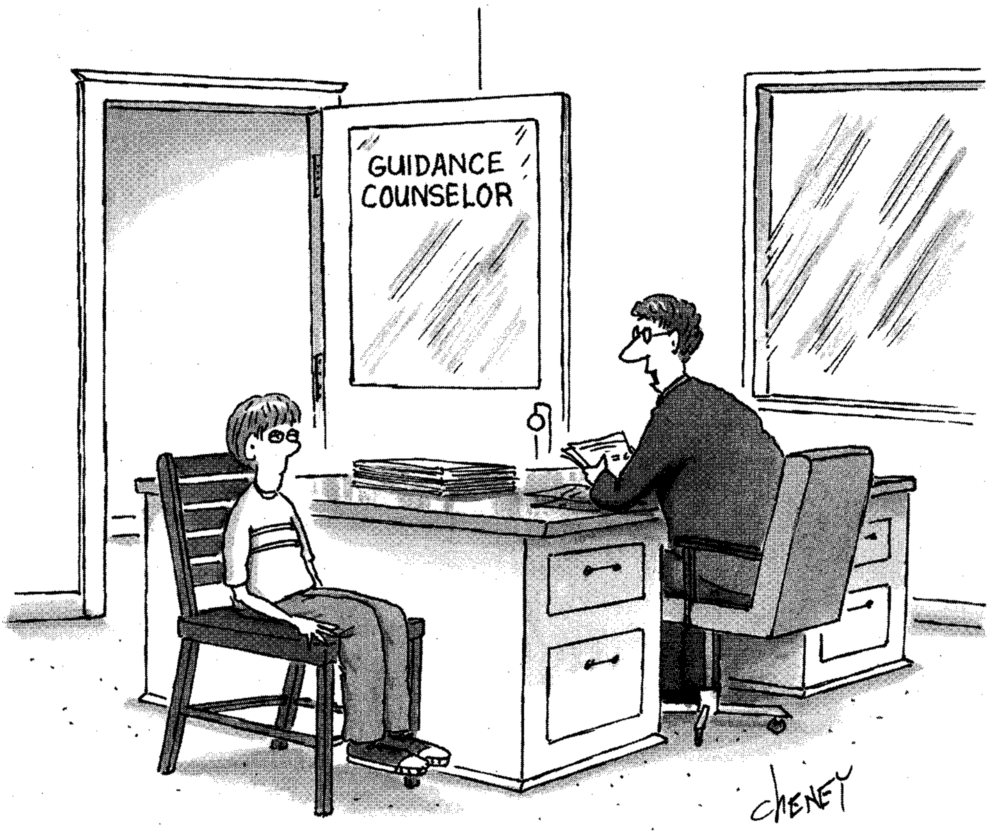
Consider now the menu: it spins, perhaps, but it does not sow. It simply lies there or, rather, allows itself to be propped up while, like a politician or a winning child, it promises big, and then delivers what it delivers. Yet the menu remains, even after its restaurant has faded, a lovely paper monument to hope, the permeable membrane between the diner’s dreams and the market’s prices.

These thoughts, and others equally philosophical, may be prodded into being by a new exhibition, “New York Eats Out,” at the New York Public Library. Drawn chiefly from a collection of twenty-five thousand menus assembled between 1900 and 1924 by Miss Frank E. Buttolph, the menus tell a small social history of the city. Very French and Very Not French are the two poles between which New York dining styles have perpetually oscillated. If Very French was once Very Very French—at the St. Nicholas Hotel in 1863, diners were expected to know what a Matelotte d’Anguille au Vin de Porto was—Very Not French, surprisingly, was already a genre at the turn of the century. See, for instance, the all-English menu of the Straight Edge Kitchen, which promised, “We want to make good food permanently popular upon its merits, and not merely a temporary fad.” The wildest menu is from the great restaurateur Joe Baum’s Forum of the Twelve Caesars (Alpine Snow Hare in Spiced Red Wine: $4.65) and the saddest from another Baum creation, Windows on the World. We also learn that in 1900 at the Currier’s Ladies Restaurant the comely diners were instructed, “Remember it is unnecessary to pay the waiter; all we expect from you is the bill of fare price. If you cannot get waited on without paying extra, call the attention of the head waiter to the fact.” To which quixotic notion we add, after a century’s experience, “Lady—pay the waiter.”

—*Adam Gopnik*


new york
EATS
OUT
GOOD
EATING
PIES · BURGERS · CHOPS
THE 3 DRAGO
Beef from Versailles
Caruso

EVER MEULEN



"So, what are we aiming for, Timmy—the Nobel Prize or 'Inspected by No. 7'?"

• •

they have big houses, big cars. We, too."

It was almost dusk when we left Al-Madina. Sheikh Rashash's parting line to me was: "The President has given us electricity and roads, and I hope he gives us more presents in the future. Anything he gives would be nice. The Shia are with Saddam Hussein. The great-grandfather of the Shia is Saddam Hussein. We have only one leader, and he is Saddam Hussein."

We pulled into the town of Qurna, back on the main road to Basra, just after sunset. It was a dark night, but out in the distance we could see billowing flames, gas burnoffs from oil fields. Lion felt bad about not finding me a traditional marsh boat in Al-Madina, and we drove down to a filthy little river at the edge of town, where he thought such a boat might be, but there was nothing. We passed a hodgepodge of shops and kebab houses and entered a warren of little streets, where men in open workshops were welding metal doors and gates, which seemed to be the town's main industry. There was not much electricity, and the place felt lost and poor. The Tigris and the Euphrates meet at Qurna, which Iraqis believe is the site of the Biblical Garden of Eden. We were shown the way to "Adam's Tree" by a gaggle of local children. The tree was surrounded by a cracked cement patio next to a dilapidated hotel, although you could tell that this section of town had once been substantial. Several old-fashioned villas, reminiscent of those in the back streets of Havana, were still standing, although they had fallen into disrepair.

A couple of green cloths were tied around the central bough of the tree. One of the children shinnied up and tore a piece of cloth off, and slid back down. Ahmed explained that the cloth is believed to cure sick people. I noticed that someone had ripped out a large piece of the tree's trunk, and that the orange flesh of the wood was raw. Someone had also added some graffiti to the tree.

There are several art galleries in the old-fashioned stone houses along Abu Nawas, a street that runs along the Tigris River across from the Republican Palace complex in Baghdad. Most of the paintings and sculptures on display are decorative or abstract. The only art with a specific content in Iraq either glorifies Saddam or is some kind of gruesome protest of the national tragedy caused by U.S.-Zionist aggression. One evening, I attended the opening of an exhibition of the work of a woman who had made paintings dedicated to the date palm, Iraq's national tree. In some of the paintings, the palms were leafless, bent over, or set against bleak landscapes—much like the trees around Al-Madina, in the drained marshlands. The artist explained to me that the date palm symbolizes the Iraqi soul and psyche, and the dead palms in the darkly rendered paintings, as I suspected, were intended to represent "the suffering of the Iraqi people under U.N. sanctions and war." If there was a subtext, she didn't let on.

Most of the galleries on Abu Nawas have at least one bucolic painting of the marshes, usually depicting robed women paddling canoes in calm water against a backdrop of reeds and woven houses. Like the paintings of Bedouins astride prancing stallions, another Iraqi favorite, scenes of the marshlands are cherished images of old Iraq. The marsh scenes even appear occasionally in the paintings of Saddam. In an exhibition at the Saddam Arts Center, I saw one in which Saddam is dressed like a humble peasant, with a headscarf. He smiles and helps women gather reeds. Boats drift by and birds fly overhead. The backdrop is a forest of reeds. Life is perfect.

Nowhere in Iraq did I see photographs or paintings of the wasteland that the marshes have become today. Indeed, the marshes are rarely mentioned. Government apparatchiks are made uncomfortable by the subject. My guide, Ahmed, refrained from uttering any opinion whatsoever about the marshlands during our trip. After returning to Baghdad, however, I described my horror at what I had seen in the south to a government adviser, with whom I was alone. He nodded and put a hand on his forehead. "Yes, it's terrible, just terrible what has happened there." I took him to mean that he shared my sentiments, and from the pained look in his eyes, I believe that he did. But I realized later that what he had said could be construed to mean almost anything.

In late October, Iranian officials accused Iraq of setting fire to the small pocket of remaining marshland on their common border—the Al-Hawizeh marsh, which is forty miles northeast of the area I was allowed to visit. There was speculation that the fires had been set in the dried-out marshlands to deny cover to Iranian-based Shiite guerrillas who are expected to cross over if the Bush Administration starts a war against Baghdad.

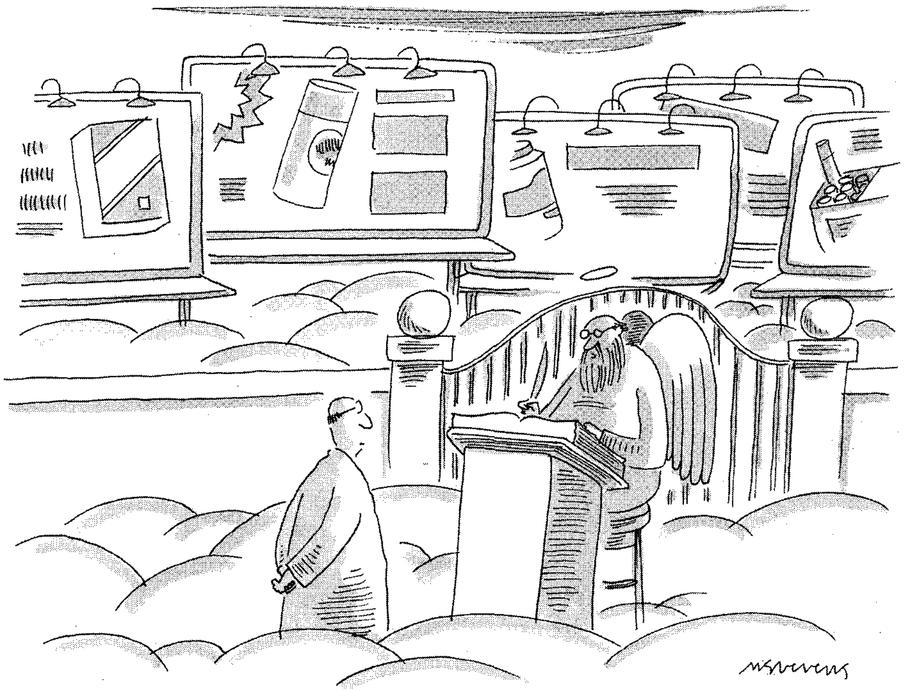
I stopped in Amman, Jordan, for a few days on my way home from Baghdad, and I met an Iraqi exile there, a Sunni Muslim whose family, which is very grand, used to control part of the marshes. He lives in a stone villa on the outskirts of the city with two German shepherds. His living room is festooned with a collection of old muskets, battle-axes, and other mementos of his family, and he showed me two prized possessions: a pair of spiked bronze helmets from the seventh-century wars that followed the Prophet Muhammad's proclamation of the birth of Islam, and an intimate snapshot of Iraq's ill-fated king, Faisal II (who was murdered, along with most of his family, in the revolution of 1958), shirtless and smiling on waterskis. The walls of the house were filled with framed portraits of the exile's illustrious ancestors—sheikhs and pashas and royal-guard commanders wearing dashing robes and silver swords—from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Iraq was still called Mesopotamia.

My host left Iraq during Saddam's rise to power. Several of his relatives still live there, and he explained that, for their sakes, I could not identify him. People who have family members in Iraq regard them as hostages of the system and are terrified that their relatives will be punished if they speak out openly against Saddam. After one of Saddam's former generals defected to the West, he received a videotape in the mail showing the rape of a woman who was a close relative.

I told the Sunni exile about the dismal landscape of the marshes and about the sheikh in the hamlet of Al-Madina, and how he had extolled the virtues and marvels of the marsh Arabs' new life, without water and boats, and his description of happy people making bricks and working as taxi-drivers. My host laughed and shook his head. "The sheikhs can't tell the truth. Saddam brings them to Baghdad one by one and talks to them. They have to praise him and recite poetry to him, and he gives them presents. They have no choice. They know that anything they say to you will go straight back to him." The Mukhabarat had agents, eyes and ears for Saddam, posted in every town and village, he said.

The exiled Iraqi felt that I had perhaps misinterpreted one aspect of the situation in Iraq. "Most Westerners are mistaken to make a point out of the repression of the Shia," he said. "In Iraq, there is little difference between Shiites and Sunnis. They are all Arabs. Most of the commanders of the Iraqi Army in the war against Iran were Shiites. But later Saddam became concerned about the possible Shiite connections with Iran. In the south, what you see is repression by Saddam against Arabs who happen to be Shia."

The overemphasis on the hostility between Sunnis and Shiites was troubling to many Sunnis. "We are blamed because it looks as if Saddam represents the Sunni, and he doesn't," the exile said. "The tribes in the south have lived close together for a long time, and if they had problems in the past it was over land, or something else, not because one was Sunni and one was Shia." A great many Iraqis, he said, wanted to see an end to Saddam Hussein. "There are Army officers, inside and out of Iraq, waiting, but they know that if they are discovered they and their families will be destroyed. Many of them were ready to act in 1991, and they could not believe it when the Americans stopped their advance and pulled back." My host predicted that an American-led war was inevitable. "And then, my friend, you will see, if the Americans come in, those sheikhs you talked to, they will change," he said. "They will back any government that replaces Saddam. But there is one thing the Americans should know. The Iraqis cannot stand foreigners. You can win the Iraqis over fast and you can also lose them very fast. If the Americans come, they should put in any government they can find, and then they should leave." ♦



"Unfortunately, a few years back we had to start accepting advertising."

FICTION

THE ANT OF THE SELF

BY ZZ PACKER

"Opportunities," my father says after I bail him out of jail. "You've got to invest your money if you want opportunities." We're driving around Louisville in my mother's car. Who knows why he came down here, forty miles south of where he lives, but I don't ask too many questions. I just try to get my father, Ray Bivens, Jr., back across the river to his place in Indiana.

My father just got a D.U.I.—again—though that didn't stop him from asking for the keys. When I didn't give them up, he sighed and shook his head as though I withheld keys from him daily. "C'mon, Spurge," he'd said. "The pigs aren't even looking."

It's 1995. He's the only person I know who still calls cops pigs, a holdover from what he refers to as his Black Panther days, when everyone raked their globes of hair with black-fisted Afro picks, then left them stuck there like javelins. When, as he tells it, he and Huey P. Newton met in basements and wore leather jackets and stuck it to whitey. Having given me investment advice, he now watches the world outside the Honda a little too jubilantly. I take the curve around the city on the Watterson Expressway, past the backsides of chain restaurants and malls, office parks, and the shitty Louisville zoo.

"That's your future," he says. "Sound investments."

"Maybe you should ask the pigs for your bail money back," I say. "We could invest that."

He doesn't respond. By now he's too busy checking out my mom's new car. Ray Bivens, Jr., doesn't own a car. The one he just got his D.U.I. in belonged to a friend.

He takes the Honda's cigarette lighter out of its round home, stares into the unlit burner, then puts it back as if he'd thought about pocketing it but had decided against it. He drums a little syncopation on the dash, then, bored, starts adjusting his seat as though he's on the Concorde. He wants to say something about the car—how much it cost and how the hell Mama could afford it—but he doesn't. Instead, out of the blue, voice almost pure, he says, "Is that my old dress jacket? I loved that thing."

HONOR
STUDENT

J. OTTO SEIBOLD

"It's not yours. Mama bought it. I needed a blazer for debate." The words come out chilly, but I don't say anything else to warm them up. And I feel a twinge of childishness mentioning my mother, like she's beside me, worrying the jacket hem, smoothing down the sleeves. I make myself feel better by recalling that when I went to post bail the woman behind the bulletproof glass asked if I was a reporter.

"You keep getting money from debate, we could invest."

When most people talk about investing, they mean stocks or bonds or mutual funds. What my father means is his friend Splo's cockfighting arena, or some dude who goes door to door selling exercise equipment that does all the exercise for you. "Didn't you just win some cash?" he asks. "From debate?"

"Bail," I say. "I used it to pay your bail."

He's quiet for a while. I wait for him to stumble out a thanks, or promise to pay me back with money he knows he'll never have. Finally, he sighs and says, "Most investors buy low and sell high. Know why they do that?"

Before I can respond, I hear his voice, loud and naked. "I *axed* you, Do you know why they do that?" He's shaking my arm. "You answer me when I ask you something."

I twist my arm away from his grasp to show I'm not afraid. We swerve out of our lane. Cars behind us swerve as well, then zoom around us and pull ahead.

"Do you know who this is?" he says. "Do you know who you're talking to?"

I haven't been talking to anyone, but I keep this to myself.

"I'll tell you who you're talking to—Ray Bivens, Jr.!"

He used to be this way with Mama. Never hitting, but always grabbing, groping, his halitosis forever in her face. After the divorce, he insisted on partial custody. At first, all I had to do was take the bus across town. Then, when he couldn't afford an apartment in the city, I had to take the Greyhound into backwoods Indiana. I'd spend Saturday and Sunday so bored I'd assign myself extra homework, work ahead in textbooks, whatever there was to do, while waiting for Ray Bivens, Jr., to fart himself awake and take me back to the bus station.

That was how debate started. Every year there was a different topic, and when they made the announcement last year it was like an Army recruitment campaign, warning students that they'd be expected to dedicate even their weekends to the cause. I rejoiced, thinking that I would never have to visit my father again. And I was good at debate. My brain frowned at illogic. But I don't think that my teachers liked me because of my logical mind; they liked me because I was quiet and small, and not rowdy like they expected black guys to be. Once, my history teacher, Mrs. Ampersand, said, "You stay away from those drugs, Spurgeon, and you'll go far." I could always think of things to say about U.S.-China diplomatic relations, or deliver a rebuttal on prison overcrowding, but with someone like Mrs. Ampersand all debate logic fell away, and in my head I'd call her a bitch, tell her that the strongest stuff in my mother's house was a bottle of NyQuil.

We've crossed the bridge into Indiana, but my father is still going. "*That's right! You're talking to Ray Bivens, Jr.! And don't you forget it!*"

Autumn is over, and yet it's not quite winter. Indiana farmland speeds past in black and white. Beautiful until you realize the world is supposed to be in color.

Later, calm again, he says, "Imagine a stock. Let's say the stock is the one I was telling you about, Scudder Mid Cap. The stock is at fifty bucks. If it's a winner, it doesn't stay at fifty bucks for long. It goes to a hundred, let's say, or two hundred. But first it's gotta get to fifty-one, fifty-two, and so on. So a stock increasing in price is a good sign. That's when you buy."

I thank him for telling me.

"Doesn't matter what you invest in, either," Ray Bivens, Jr., says. "That's the beauty. Don't gotta even think about it. That's something you won't hear from an accountant."

"You mean stockbroker. A stockbroker advises about stocks. Not an accountant."

His face turns bitter, as though he's about to slap me, but then he thinks better of it and says, "So you know who to go to when you get some extra cash."

"Look. I just told you, I don't have any money."

"You will, Spurgeon," he says. He puts an arm around me, and I can smell his odor from the jail. I don't have to see his face to know exactly how it looks right now. Urgently earnest, a little too sincere. Like a man explaining to his wife why he's late coming home. "I'll pay back every penny. I mean that."

"I believe you," I say, prying his arm from where it rests on my neck.

"You believe me," he says, "but do you believe *in* me?" He puts his arm back where it was, and now he's some suburban dad, a Little League coach congratulating his charge.

"I believe in you."

His arm falls away as he settles deeper into his seat with this knowledge, the leather sighing and complaining under him. I take the exit that promises a Citgo, park at a gas pump. The fluorescent lights stutter off and on as I begin pumping gas. I can hear what my mother would say—that my father is a cross I have to bear, that the Good Book says, "A child shall lead them," and all that crap, which basically boils down to "He's *your* father. Your blood, not mine."

Ray Bivens, Jr., leans against the car and stretches. Then he cleans the windshield with a squeegee. When I'm finished filling the tank, he says, "Hey, Spurgeon. How about breaking off a few bills? You know, they frisked me clean in lockdown."

I give him a twenty and wait in the car. He's in the Citgo so long I get out and wipe off the squeegee streaks he left on the windshield. Finally, he comes back with a six-pack of Schlitz and a family-sized bag of Funyuns. "Listen," he says, handing me a beer. "We have to make a quick stop in Jasper."

Jasper, Indiana, is where his ex-girlfriend Lupita lives.

"I knew it," I say, and hand back the unopened beer before starting the car. "You're in trouble."

One of the fluorescent lights overhead blinks out. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Why do we have to go to Jasper, all of a sudden?"

"If you shut your mouth and go to Jasper you'll find out."

"This is Mama's car," I remind him. "She wants it back."

"Why you gotta act like everything I ask you to do is gonna kill you? You my son. I tell you to do something, you obey."

I try to imagine what he's running from—men who'll tie him up at gunpoint and demand the twenty dollars he owes them, police officers waiting at his door—but those thoughts give way to the only thing we'll find in Jasper: Lupita, watching TV, painting her toenails. I've been to Lupita's place twice. It's full of birds. Huge blue-and-gold macaws. Yellow-naped Amazons. Rainbow lorikeets that squirt their putrid fructivorous shit on you. Tons of birds, and not in cages, either. I don't think my father liked them perching on his shoulders any more than I did, but the birds could land anywhere on Lupita and she'd wear them like jewelry.

Then it occurs to me that this is the only reason he cleaned the windshield.

"You're going to make me drive you and Lupita around so the two of you can get drunk. I knew it."

"If you don't shut up—"

I don't speak to him, and he doesn't speak to me. We pass a billboard that reads, "When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade." I try to think of what my mother will say. She let me borrow the car to get him out of jail. But she wasn't about to pay bail, and she definitely won't want me coming home at midnight, her car smelling of cigarettes and Mad Dog.

My father sees me fuming and says, "I told you I was going to get your money back, right? Well, there's going to be a march tomorrow. A million people in Washington, D.C. One. Million. People."

"No," I say. "Dear God, no."

"Exactly," he says.

At one point, I'd wanted to go to the march. I imagined it would be as historic as Dr. King's March on Washington, as historic as the dismantling of the Wall. The men's choir of my mother's church was going, but I didn't want to be trapped on a bus with a bunch of men singing hymns, feeling sorry for me because I'd been born with Ray Bivens, Jr., for a father. And, what's more, I had a debate tournament. I imagine Sarah Vogedes, my partner, prepping for our debate on U.S. foreign policy toward China, checking her watch. She'd have to use our second-stringers, or perhaps even Derron Ellersby, a basketball player so certain he'd make the N.B.A. that he'd joined the debate team "to sound smooth for all those post-game interviews." This was the same Derron Ellersby who ended his rebuttals by pointing at me, saying, "Little Man over here's going to break it down for ya," or who'd single me out in the cafeteria, telling his friends, "Little Man's got skills, yo! Break off some a your skills!" as if he expected me to carry on a debate with my tuna casserole.

I picture Sarah Vogedes's composed face growing rumpled as Derron agrees with our opponent. I imagine Derron, index cards scattered in front of him, looking as if he'd been faked out before a layup, saying, "Yo! Sarah V! Where's Little Man? Where he at?"

For once I'm glad Ray Bivens, Jr., is scheming so hard he doesn't see me smiling. If he sensed in *any* way that I might be willing, he'd call the whole thing off.

"That's in Washington, D.C.," I remind my father. "Nearly seven hundred miles away."

"I know. But first we're going to Jasper," he says. "To get the birds."

Technically, the birds are my father's, not Lupita's. He bought them when he was convinced that the animals were an investment. He tried selling them door to door. When that didn't work and he couldn't afford to keep them, Lupita volunteered to take care of them. Lupita knew about birds, she'd said, because she owned a rooster when she was five, back in Guatemala.

It is completely dark. I ask, once more, what he plans to do with these birds, and he tells me that he's going to sell them.

"But you couldn't sell them the first time," I say.

"I didn't have a million potential buyers the first time."

I tell him that I can take him to Jasper, or I can take him home, but that I absolutely cannot, under any circumstances, cut school and miss my debate tournament to drive him to D.C.

"Don't you want your money back?" he says. "One macaw alone will pay back that bail money three times over."

"What are a million black men going to do with a bunch of birds? Even if you could sell them, how're you going to get them there?"

"Would you just drive?" he says, then sucks his teeth, making a noise that could almost be a curse. He stretches out in his seat, then starts up, explaining things to me as if I'd had a particularly stupefying bout of amnesia: "You're gonna have Afrocentric folks there. Afrocentrics and Africans, tons of Africans. And what do Africans miss most? That's right. The motherland. And what does the Mother Africa have tons of? Monkeys, lions, and guess what else? Birds. Not no street pigeons but real birds, like the kind I'm selling. Macaws and African grays. Lorikeets and yellow napes and shit." He might as well have added, "Take that."

I say nothing, thinking quickly but driving slowly. Off the interstate, the road turns narrow and insignificant. We pass through Paoli Peaks and Hoosier National Forest before finally arriving in Jasper.

We pull into Lupita's driveway. In the dark, her lawn ornaments resemble gravestones. Motion-detector floodlights buzz on as my father walks up to the house. Lupita stands on her porch, wielding a shotgun. She's wearing satiny pajamas that show her nipples. Pink curlers droop from her hair like blossoms.

"What do *joo* want?" Her eyes narrow in on him.

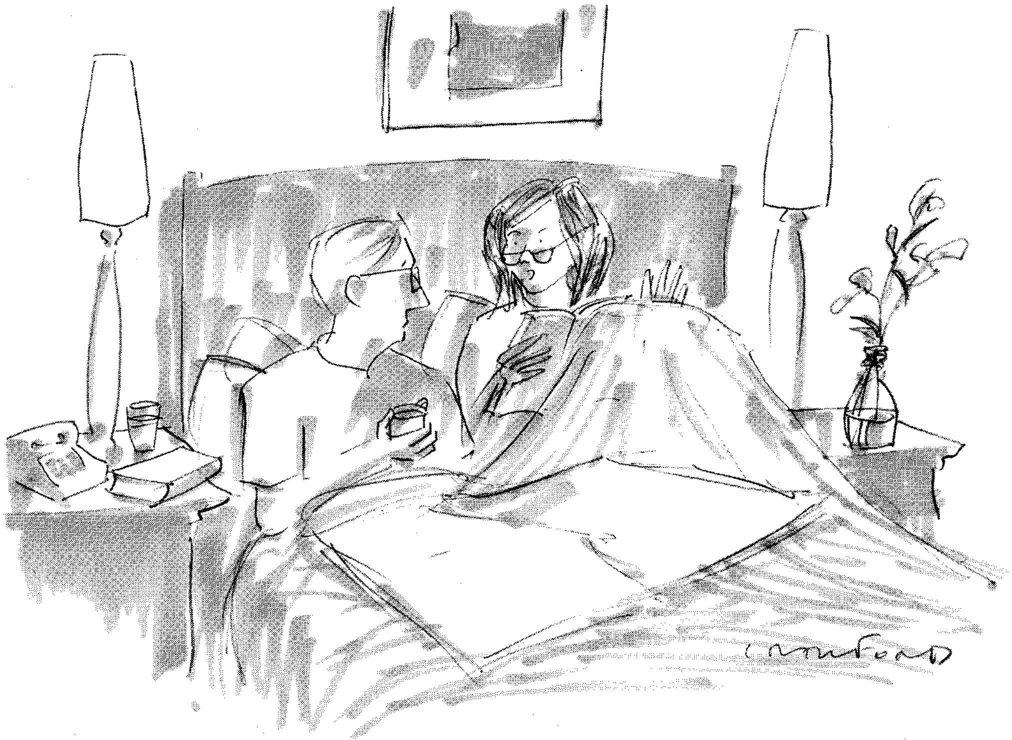
I stay in the car. She and my father disappear into the house while I watch the pinwheel lawn daisies spin in the dark. The yelling from inside the house is mostly Lupita: "I am tired of your blag ass! Enough eez enough!" Then it stops. They've argued their way to the bedroom, where the door slams shut and all is quiet.

But the calm doesn't hold. Lupita breaks out with some beautiful, deadly Spanish threats, and the screen door bangs open. My father comes out clutching cages, each crammed two apiece with birds. I can hear birdseed and little gravelly rocks from the cage's spill all over the car's interior when he puts them on the back seat. He doesn't say a word.

He makes another trip into the house, and returns with another cageful of birds. Lupita follows him, but she stops halfway from the car. She stands there in her ensemble of sexy pajamas and pink sponge curlers and shotgun.

"Don't get out," Ray Bivens, Jr., says to me. "We're going to drive off. Slowly."

Lupita yells after us, "Joo are never thinking about



"Yes, I guess I'm in the mood, but certain restrictions apply."

maybe what Lupita feels!" For a moment I think she's going to come after us, but all she does is plop down on her porch step, holding her head in her hands.

Once the birds get used to the rhythm of the road, they swap crude, disjointed conversations with one another. A Mexican redhead sings "Love Me Do," but gets the inflections all wrong. A lorikeet says, "Where the dickens is my pocket watch?," then does what passes for a man's lewd laugh. If there's a lull, one will say *"Arriba, riba, riba!"* and get them all going again.

"Bird crap doesn't have an odor," my father says. "That's the paradox of birds."

"She loved those birds," I say. "And you just took them away."

"They learn best when stressed out," he says. "Why do you think they say '*Arriba!*' all the time? They get it from the Mexicans who're all in a rush to get them exported."

I stick to the point. "Don't try to make excuses. You hurt her. And what about the birds? You didn't think to get food, did you?"

"You are a complete pussy, you know that? You need to go to this march. When you go, check in at the pussy booth and tell 'em you want to exchange yours for a johnson."

I check the rearview mirror, then cross all lanes of I-65 north until I'm on the shoulder.

"You better have a good reason for stopping," he says.

"Get out," I say. The birds have ceased their chatter, and when I turn around they're looking from me to him as though they'd placed bets on who will go down in flames.

Ray Bivens, Jr., clamps his hand to his forehead in mock dumbfoundedness. "You ain't heard that before? Don't tell me nobody never called you no pussy?"

"Get out, sir," I say.

"Yeah. I'll get out all right." He opens the passenger-side door just as a semi whooshes by. He slams the door and traps the cold air with me.

It's late—past midnight. I stop at the next exit to call my mother. She says if I don't get my tail back in her house tonight she'll skin me alive. I tell her I love her, too. She likes to pretend that I'm the man of the house, but it's at times like this that it's clear that the only man of the house is Jesus.

I buy a Ho Ho at a gas station, and, as I separate the cake part from the creamy insides with my teeth, I think about how Derron would have shrugged Ray Bivens, Jr.,'s schemes away with a good-hearted hunch of the shoulders. "Pops is crazy," he'd say to the mike in an N.B.A. post-game interview, then put his gently clenched fist over his heart like someone accepting an award. "But I love the guy."

I get back into the car. I return to the last exit before heading north again, going slowly in the right-hand lane. When I see my father, I pull over to the shoulder, pop open the electronic locks. He acts like he knew I would come back for him all along. We don't talk for nearly an hour, but everything is completely clear: if I am not a pussy, I will cut school, forget about the debate, and go to D.C.

Just outside Clarksburg, West Virginia, I pull over. I can't make it to the exit. Twice I almost nodded off. When I slump onto the steering wheel, my father gets out and rouses me enough for us to exchange places, even though he's not supposed to be driving.

I don't know how long I've been asleep, but I wake to an umbrella cockatoo chanting, "Sexy, sexy!" My eyes adjust to the dim light, first making out the electric glow of the dash panels, and then the scenery beyond the cool of the windows. We are on a small hilly road. It is so dark and so full of conifers that I feel like we're travelling through velvet.

Ray Bivens, Jr., I can tell, has been waiting for me to wake up. At first I think he wants me to take over the wheel, but then I realize he wants company. He raps on the car window and says, "In ancient Mesopotamia it was hot. There was no glass. What they did have was the wheel—"

The yellow-naped Amazon breaks into the Oscar Mayer wiener jingle before I can ask my father what the hell he's talking about.

"Shut up!" he yells, and I sit up, startled, thinking that he's yelling at me. The bird says "Rawrk!" and starts the jingle over, from the beginning.

"Here's why windows are called win-

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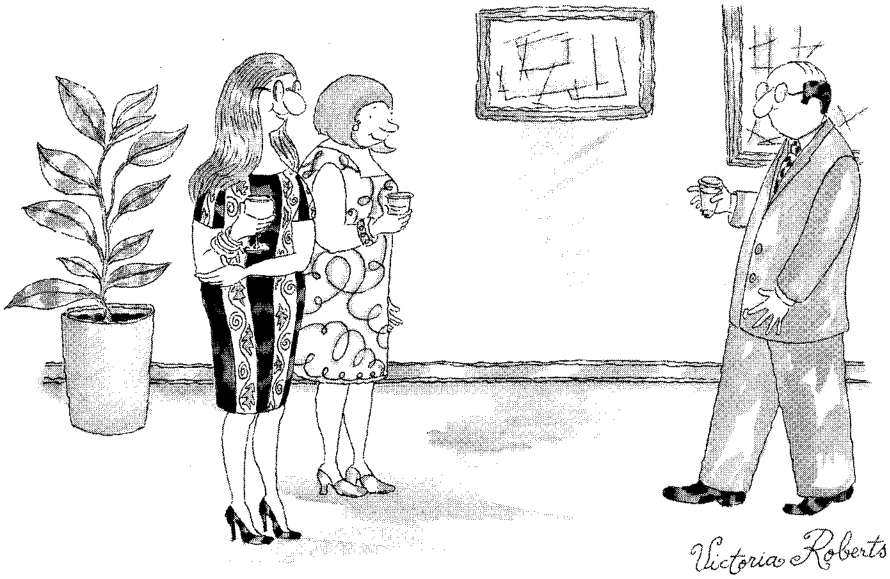


"Here comes fury without purpose."

• •

dows," he says with strained calmness when the bird has finished, but a lorikeet interrupts. "Advil works," the bird says, "better than Tylenol."

My father blindly gropes the back seat for a cage, seizes one, and slams it against another cage. All the birds revolt, screeching and shuffling feathers. But Ray Bivens, Jr., raises his voice above the din. "The Mesopotamians cut out circles, or 'O's, in their homes to mimic the shape of the wheel, but also to let in the wind!" he yells. "And there you have it. Your modern-day window. Get it? 'Wind-o.' "

I look to see if he's taking himself seriously. He used to say shit like this when I was little. I could never tell whether he was kidding me or himself. "You're trying to tell me that the Mesopotamians spoke English? And that they created little 'O's in their homes to let in the wind?"

"All right. Don't believe me, then."

We make it into Arlington at eight in the morning, park the car at a garage, and take the metro into D.C. with the morning commuters. White men with their briefcases and mushroom-colored trenchcoats. White women with fleet haircuts, their chic lipstick darker than blood. The occasional Asian, Hispanic—wearing the same costume, but somehow looking nervous. Mostly, though, we see black men—groups of black men wearing T-shirts with the names of churches and youth groups emblazoned on them. Men in big, loose kente-cloth robes; men in suits with the traditional Nation of Islam bow tie.

My father hands me two cages, and he hefts two. While the morning commuters eye us, he discusses the bird prices loudly. Once we get closer to the Mall, we can hear African drums, gospel music blaring from the loudspeakers, and someone playing rap with bass so heavy it hurts your heart. Everything has an early-morning smell to it, cold and wet with dew, but already thousands have marked their territory with portable chairs and signs. Venders balance basketfuls of T-shirts on their heads; D.C. kids nudge us, trying to sell us water for a dollar a cup. The Washington Monument stands in front of us like a big granite pencil, miles away, it seems; and everywhere men shake hands, laugh like they haven't seen each other in years. They make pitches, exchange business cards, and congratulate each other for just getting here. But, most of all, they speak in passwords: "Keep Strong," "Stay Black," "Love Your Black Nation."

As we work our way through the masses, Ray Bivens, Jr., keeps looking off into the distance in search of the perfect customer.

"Brother," one man says, shaking his head at me. "I don't know if them birds males or not, but they sho ain't black!"

I nod in my father's direction and say, "Looks like you've got a customer."

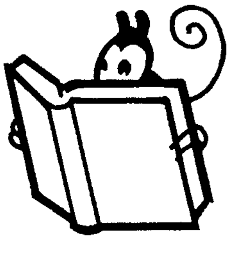
He shoots me an annoyed look. "Let's split up," he says. "We'll cover more area if we're spread out."

"O.K., chief," I say. But I stay where I am.

After a few speeches from Christian ministers, a stiff-looking bow-tied man introduces Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. I'm so far back that I have to look at the large-screen TVs, and as Farrakhan takes to the stage the Fruit of Islam phalanx behind him applauds violently.

I make my way toward the edge of the crowd to get some air. Though I'm already as far away from the main stage as one can be, it still takes me half an hour to push through the crowd of men, most of whom pat me on the back like uncles at a family reunion. Some black women cheer as they stand on the other side of Independence Avenue, but others wave placards that read "Let Us In!" or "Remember Those You Left Home." It occurs to me that I can stay here on the sidelines for the entire march. A hush falls over the crowd, then it erupts into whistles and cheers and catcalls, and people begin chanting, "Jesse! Jesse!"

On the screen, Jesse Jackson is clasping hands with Farrakhan, but he doesn't do much more than that. It seems that the day will be a long one, with major speakers bookended by lesser-known ones.



Now a preacher from some small town is on the podium. "Brothers, we have to work it out with each other! How are we going to go back to our wives, our babies' mothers, and tell them that we love *them* if we can't tell our own brothers that we love them?"

At first, he sounds like every other speaker, breaking a cardinal rule of speech: Reiteration, not regurgitation. He reads from a letter written in 1712 by William Lynch, a white slave owner from Virginia. Farrakhan read from this same letter, I realize, but the content got lost in his nearly three-hour speech. The letter explains how to control slaves by pitting dark ones against light ones, big-plantation slaves against small-plantation slaves, female slaves against male ones. The preacher ends by telling everyone that freedom is attained when the ant of the self—that small, blind, crumb-seeking part of ourselves—casts off slavery and its legacy, becoming a huge brave ox.

"Well, well, well!" An elbow nudges me. "Wasn't that powerful, brother?" A man wearing a fez extends his hand for me to shake.

I shake his hand, but he doesn't let go.

"Powerful!" the fezzed man shouts above the applause.

"Yes," I say, and turn away.

I must not be convincing enough, because the guy taps me on the shoulder and says, "Feel this! The power here! This is powerful!"

"Don't get me wrong," I say, "but I'm just here because my father made me come."

The man in the fez screws up his face in the sunlight, features bunched in confusion. He puts his hand to his ear.

"My father!" I yell. "My father made me come!"

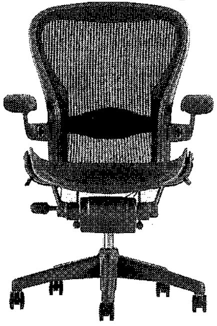
"Made you come? Made you? This, my brother, is a day of atonement! You got to cut your father a little slack for caring for your sorry self!"

Other men's eyes are on me now, but I'll be damned if this man who doesn't even know me sides with Ray Bivens, Jr. "I thought the whole point of all this was to take responsibility," I say. "Put an end to asking for slack. If you knew my father you'd know that his whole damn life is as slack as a pants suit from J. C. Penney!"

"Hold up, hold up, hold up," a voice says. The voice comes from a man with a bullet-smooth head. The pistils and stamens of the monstrous Hawaiian-flower-print shirt he's wearing seem to stare at me, and suddenly his face is so close I can smell the mint of his breath.

"You need to learn that responsibility is a two-way street!" The Hawaiian-shirt guy points to my chest. "You have to take responsibility and reach out to him."

Many more people have turned to look at us, thanks in no small part to the constant squawking of the birds in their cages. The Phalanx of Islam is on its



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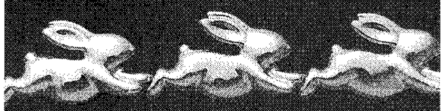

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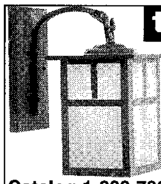

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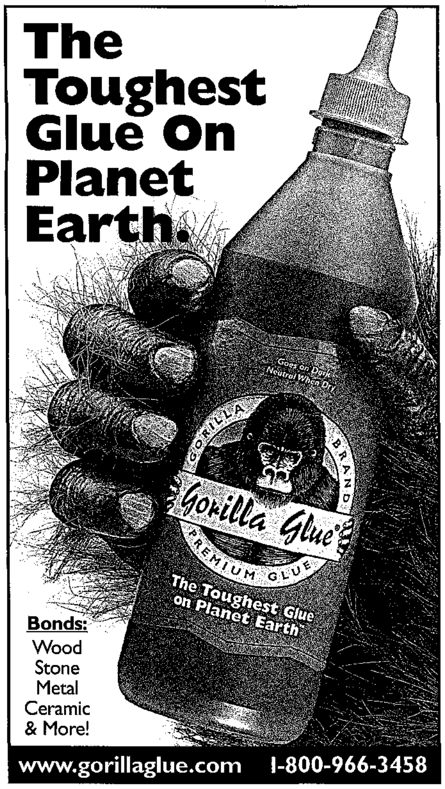

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way, moving in the form of crisp, gray-suited men wearing stern looks and prison muscles.

"Let me ask you a question, my brother," he says. "Why are you here? You don't seem to want to atone—not with your pops, not with anybody."

Those around me have formed a sideshow of which I seem to be the villain, and they look at me expectantly. The Hawaiian-shirted man folds his arms across his chest and jerks his chin up, daring me to answer him.

"Atoning for one's wrongs is different from apologizing," I begin. "One involves actions, the other words." I don't want to say anything now that the crowd around me is silent, listening; now that the sun in my eyes is so strong I feel like crying. I can feel the debate judge mouthing "Time's up," can see the disbelief and disappointment in the men's faces. An oxford-shirted security guard grabs me by the arm.

"What," he says, "seems to be the problem, son?"

"Look," I finally say to him and anyone else who'll listen. "I'm not here to atone. I'm here to sell birds."

I spot my father by the cages balanced on his shoulders when the marchless march is pretty much finished. The sky is moving toward dusk, and though speakers are still coming up to the podium, you'd stick around to listen only if they were your relatives. My father and I get pushed along with other people who are trying to leave.

I don't bother telling him how security guards clamped me on the shoulder and sat me down on the curb like a five-year-old and gave me a talking-to, reminding me of the point of the march. I don't tell him how they fed me warm flatbread and hard honey in a hot plastic tent and gave me bean pies, some pamphlets, and a Koran. But he can tell how pissed off I am.

He can see I haven't sold any birds, and I see he hasn't, either. Ray Bivens, Jr., grabs a man by the arm. The man's T-shirt reads, "Volunteer: Washington D.C."

"Where's a good bar?" my father asks. "That's cheap?"

The man raises his eyebrows and says, "Brotherman, we're trying to keep away from all that poison. At least for one day." His voice is smooth and kind, a guy from the streets who's become a counsellor, determined to give back to the community. He smiles. "You think you can make it for one day without the sauce, my brother?"

The bar we end up in is called the Haven. The bartender looks at the birds and shakes his head as if his patrons never ceased to amuse him.

Even though Ray Bivens, Jr., is sitting in the place he loves most, he still seems mad at me. So do the birds. None of them are speaking, just making noises in their throats as though they were plotting something. I ask the bartender if the birds will be safe outside; whether someone will steal them.

"Not if it's something that needs feeding," he says.

"Speaking of feeding," my father says. "I'm going to get some Funyuns. Want any?" He says this more to the bartender than to me, but I shake my head. The bartender spray-guns a 7 UP in a glass for me without my even asking, then resumes a conversation with a trio of men at the end of the counter. One man has a goiter. One has processed waves that look like cake frosting. While those two seem to be smiling and arguing at the same time, the third man says nothing, smoking his cigarette as though it were part of a search for enlightenment.

The Smoker ashes his cigarette with a pert tap. "You been at the march, youngblood?"

"Yeah. How'd you know?"

They all laugh, but no one tells me why.

The bartender dries some beer glasses. "Anybody here go?" When nobody replies, he says to me, with a knowing

wink, "These some shiftless niggers up in here!"

There's general grumbling. I tell him I was glad I went. "I was more relieved than anything else," I say.

"Relieved?" the Smoker asks, his voice wise and deep, even though he's just asking a question. "What you need relief from? You ain't old enough to be in preschool."

I try to think. "I don't know. I just get tired of feeling like I'm a fucking mascot or something," I say, surprised that I said the "f" word out loud, yet shaking my head as though I said words like that every day. "I get tired of it. You skip it for a day and it feels like a vacation."

The Smoker stares at me.

"It's like I'm in this class, surrounded by white folks. Like they just pick one, even after the good grades and staying after school and everything—even after all that, they still make you feel like *they* picked you. Token until proven adequate. Adequate until proven competent. Competent until proven worthy." I meant it to sound like I was pissed off, not only because I was, but because I thought they'd be pissed off along with me.

"Man," the guy with the goiter says, "I'm happy to hear that. You got the luxury of feeling tired. Back in the day, before you were born, couldn't that type of miscegenation shit happen."

"You mean integration," I say.

"We the ones fought for you to be in school with the white folks," he says, his goiter looking as if he'd swallowed a light bulb. "Now you talking 'bout a vacation!"

They all laugh like it's some sort of secret code that got broken.

"You'll be all right, youngblood," the Smoker says. "You'll be all right."

Just as I begin to realize they're humoring me, Ray Bivens, Jr., comes blustering through the door. He flashes a wad of money. "Luck," he says, smiling, "is sometimes lucky."

The trio at the bar high-five each other in anticipation of free drinks.

"Who," I say, "did you take that from?"

"Take?" He chucks his thumb toward me as if to say get a load of this guy. "Sold the birds. Rich white dude. Convenient store. I said, 'I got birds.' He said, 'I got money.' Six hundred bones."

I'm upset, though I don't know why. Six hundred bucks. Who in this neighborhood even had six hundred bucks? I lean toward him and whisper, "I bailed you out of jail, remember."

"Don't worry," he says. "I'll buy you a drink."

Three hours pass, and my father has beaten all the regulars trying to win money from him at pinochle when a woman appears. Her skin is the color of good Scotch. She sits between me and my father, twirls around on her barstool once, and points a red enamelled finger toward the goiter-man changing songs on the jukebox. "Play 'Love the One You're With.' Isley Brothers."

"I was going to," says the Goiter. "Just for you."

She spins around on the barstool again, so that she's facing the bottles lined up on display. "Farrah," she says, and extends a tiny limp hand in my direction. "Farrah Falana."

"That's not your real name," I say.

"Yes, it is," she says dreamily. "Farrah Falana. I was named after that show."

Now I see that she's going on fifty. She smiles at me with her mouth closed, and, for a moment, looks like a beautiful frog.

My father makes a long, admiring appraisal of her seated behind. "Farrah and Ray," he says. "I like how that sounds."

"I like how it sounds, too," Farrah says, sliding her barstool toward him.

My father and Farrah get drunk while I play an electronic trivia game with the Goiter. He knows more than I gave him credit for, but he's losing to me because he bets all his bonus points whenever he gets a chance. The Goiter and I are on our tenth game when Ray Bivens, Jr., taps me on the shoulder. I look over to see him standing very straight and tall, trying not to look drunk.

"You don't love me," he says sloppily. "You don't *understand* me."

"*You* don't understand you," I say.

Farrah is still at the bar. I plunk three quarters in the game machine. "Your go," I say to the Goiter.

"Does anybody understand themselves?" Ray Bivens, Jr., says to me softly, and for a second he looks per-

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fectly lucid. Then he says it louder, for the benefit of the whole bar, with a gravity only the drunk can muster. "Does *anybody*, I say, under*stand* themselves?"

The men at the bar look at him and decide it's one of their many jokes, and laugh, though my father is staring straight through me, as though I were nothing but a clear glass of whiskey into which he could see both the past and the future.

"Let me tell you something," Ray Bivens, Jr., says, almost spitting in my face. "Lupita *understands* me. That woman," he says, "*understands*. She's It."

Farrah smacks him on the shoulder and says, "What about me? What the fuck about me?"

An hour later he says, all cool, "Gimme the keys. Farrah and I are going for a ride."

I've had many 7 UPs, and I've twice asked my father if we could go, told him that we either had to find a motel outside the city or plan on driving back soon. Now it's nearly 3 A.M. and he's asking for the keys. The car is all the way over in Arlington, and even the metro has stopped running.

"Sir," I say. "We need to drive back."

"I said, Spurgeon, dear son, that Farrah and I are going for a ride. Now give me the keys, dear son."

A ride means they're going to her place, wherever that is. His going to her place means I have to find my own place to stay. Giving him the keys means not only that he'll be driving illegally, which I no longer care about, but that the car will end up on the other side of the country, stripped for parts.

"No," I say. "It's Mama's car."

"Mama's car," he mimics.

"Sir."

"*Maaaamaaa's caaaaar!*"

I leave the bar. I'm walking for a good minute before I hear him coming after me. I don't even know how I'm going to get back to the car, but I pick a direction and walk purposefully. I hear the click click click of what are surely Farrah's heels, hear her scream something that doesn't make sense. The street lights glow amber, and my breath makes smokelike puffs in the October air. Then I'm spun around as if for inspection, and that's when I see his face—handsome, hard-edged, not the least bit sloppy from liquor.

Sure. He's hit me before, but this is hard. Not the back of the hand, not with a belt, but punching. It's a punch meant for my face, but it lands on my shoulder. Then there's another hit, this one all knuckles, and my jaw pops open, automatically, like the trunk of a car. I try to call time-out, but he's ramming into me not with his fists but with his head. He leans into me, his head tucked into my stomach, both of us wobbling together like lovers. Finally, I push him away, and wipe what feels like yogurt running from my nose into the raw cut of my lip. I start to lick my lips, thinking that it's all over, when he rushes straight at me again, and I break my fall against a newspaper stand. Sheaves of weekly newspapers fan the ground like cards spilled from a deck. I kick him anywhere my foot will land, shouting at him, so mad that I'm happy, until I kick at air, hard, and trip myself up. I don't know how long I'm down, but he's now picking me up like a rag doll. "What the hell are you talking about?" he says, as if to shake the answer out of me. "What the hell are you talking about?"

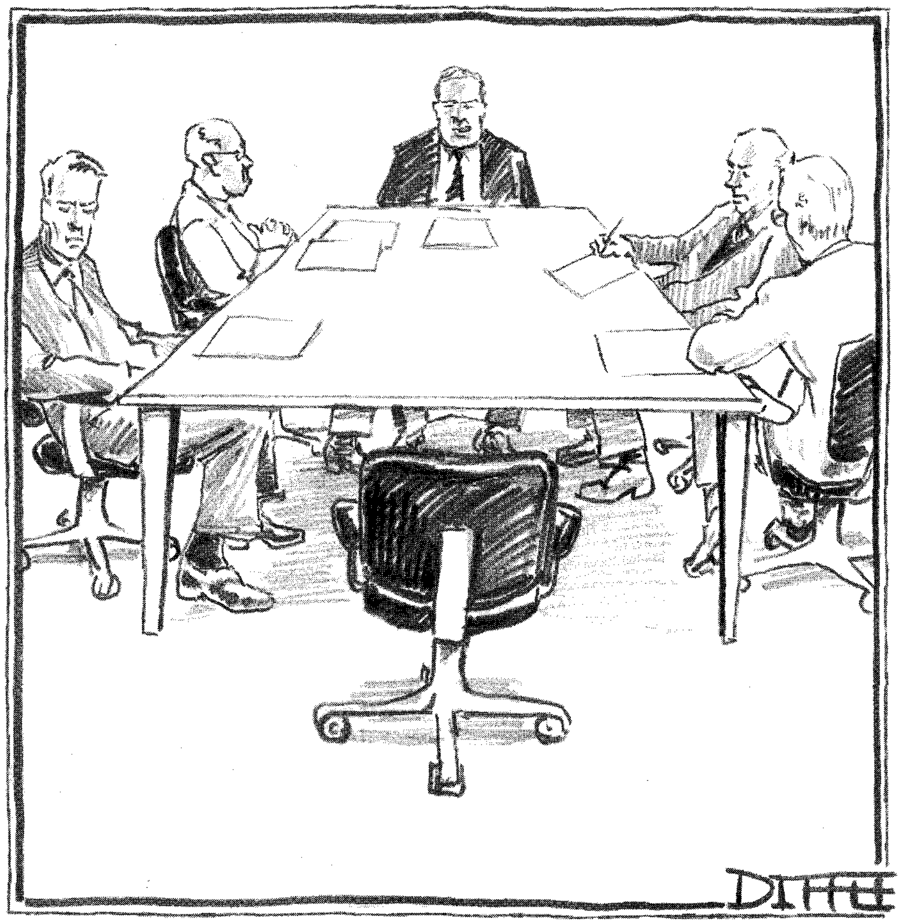
I only now realize what I've been screaming the whole time. "Wind-o!" I yell at him. "You and your goddam wind-o! There was never any wind-o! And you don't know shit about birds! *Arriba! Arriba!*"

Then I remember something I know will kill my father. He dodged the draft. They weren't going to get this nigger was his view of Vietnam. It was the one thing I'd respected him for, and yet somehow I said it: "You didn't know fucking Huey P. Newton. You never even went to Vietnam!"

"Vietnam?" he says, once, as if making sure I'd said the word.

I'm quiet. He says the word again, "Vietnam," and his eyes somehow look sightless.

I go to put my hand on his shoulder, but a torrent of people, fresh from the march, has been loosed from a nearby restaurant. They slap one another's backs,



"It's just us today. Campbell called in ethical."

smelling of Brut and Old Spice, musk-scented African oils and sweat. Already, my father has gone.

Ray Bivens, Jr., left with the car, and Farrah left with someone else. The birds are gone. My blazer is gone. After I have a Scotch the bartender says, "Look, I can float you the drinks, but who's going to pay for that, youngblood?" He points to one of the bar's smashed windowpanes.

I pay, and then have no money left for a cab or a bus. The bridge over the Potomac isn't meant for pedestrians, and it takes me half an hour to walk across it. For a long time I'm on New Hampshire Avenue, then I'm on Georgia. I ask for directions to the train station.

Perhaps he's right about Lupita. When she sat on the porch and held her head, it seemed she felt sorrier for him than she did for herself—it wasn't pity but sympathy.

I walk by an old-fashioned movie theatre whose marquee looks like one giant erection lit in parti-color lights. People pass by, wondering how to go about mugging me. A well-dressed man asks if I'm a pitcher or a catcher, and I have no idea what he means. It's good that Ray Bivens, Jr., and I fought, I tell myself. People think that you need something worth fighting for. But it must be the fighting that decides what matters, even if you're left on the sidewalk to discover that what you thought mattered means nothing after all.

"Where do you want to go?" the Amtrak ticket agent asks.

"East," I say. "Any train that goes east this time of night."

"You're in D.C., sir. Any further east and you'll be in the Atlantic."

Of course, I'm not going east. I've been going east for the last day and a half. I can finally go west now. Go home.

But it would be me who gets the snottiest ticket agent of the whole damn railway system. I look into his gray eyes. "West, motherfucker."

The ticket agent stares at me, and I stare right back. He looks down at his computer, and then at me again. "Where, pray tell, do you want to go? 'West,' I'm afraid, is a direction, not a destination."

"Louisville, Kentucky," I finally say. "Home."

He enters something into his computer. Tilts his head. He smiles when he tells me there is no train that goes to Louisville. The closest one is Cincinnati.

I walk away and sit down. How am I going to pay to get to Cincinnati, then from Cincinnati to Louisville. The only white person in the station besides the ticket agent is an old woman in a rainbow knit cap, who is having an intelligent conversation with herself.

I'll have to call home, ask my mother to give her credit-card number to this prick. A man approaches the ticket counter with his son, half asleep, riding on his back. He probably just came from the march. Probably listened to all the poems and speeches about ants and oxen and African drumming, but still he'd had this kid out in the hot sun for hours, then in the cold night for longer. It's almost five o'clock in the morning, and all this little boy wants, I can tell, is some goddam sleep.

"Hey," I say to the man. When he doesn't respond, I tap him on the non-kid shoulder. "It's pretty late to have a kid out. Don't you think?"

He puts his hand up like a traffic cop. "Dude, I don't know who you are, but you'd best not touch me."

I sit down on a wooden bench. The old white woman next to me carefully pours imaginary liquid into an imaginary cup. The man with the kid goes up to the ticket agent, who stops staring into space long enough to say, "May I help you, sir?"

"Do y'all still say 'All aboard'?"

"Excuse me?" the ticket agent says.

"My son wants to know if y'all say 'All aboard.' Like in the movies."

The boy jiggles up and down on his father's back, suddenly animated. The ticket agent sighs, hands grazing the sides of his face as if checking for stubble. Finally, he throws his arms up in a sure-what-the-hell kind of way, and disappears into the Amtrak offices. The father sets the boy down on the floor. An intercom crackles, and a voice says:

"All aboard!"

The voice is hearty and successful. The boy jumps up and down with delight. He is the happiest I've seen anyone, ever. And though the urge to weep comes over me, I wait, holding my head in my hands, and it passes. ♦

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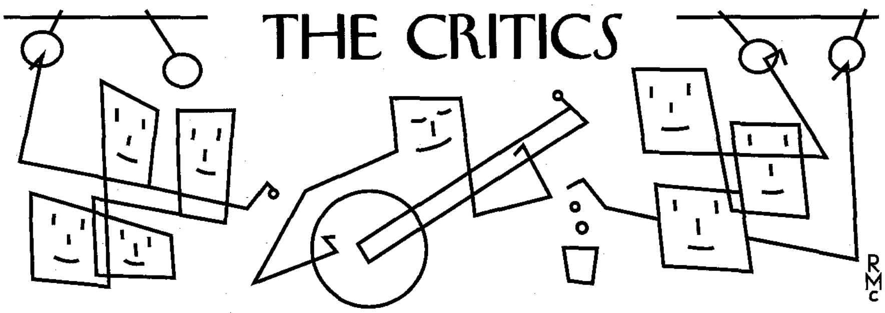


BOOKS

WHAT COMES NATURALLY

Does evolution explain who we are?

BY LOUIS MENAND

"The new sciences of human nature." Well, why not? The old sciences of human nature didn't have such a fabulous track record. They gave us segregated drinking fountains, "invented spelling," and the glass ceiling—all consequences of scientific theories about the way human beings really are. Possibly, there is a lesson there, which is that the sciences of human nature tend to validate the practices and preferences of whatever regime happens to be sponsoring them. In totalitarian regimes, dissidence is treated as a mental illness. In apartheid regimes, interracial contact is treated as unnatural. In free-market regimes, self-interest is treated as hardwired. Maybe this is unfair to the *new* sciences of human nature, though. It could be that the problem with the old sciences was simply that they weren't scientific enough—that they were mostly wishful thinking projected onto dubious data about skull size and the effects of estrogen on the ability to balance a checkbook. Today's scientists might have the capacity to get right down there among the chromosomes and the neurotransmitters, and to send back reports, undistorted by fear, favor, or the prospect of funding, about what's going on. Maybe the new sciences of human nature are *really* scientific. It's worth a look.

Steven Pinker is a psychology professor at M.I.T. and the author of an entertaining and popular book on language (his specialty), called "The Language Instinct," and a more wide-ranging volume, also popular, called "How the Mind Works." His new book, "The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature" (Viking; $27.95), recycles some of the material published in "How the Mind Works" but puts it to a more prescriptive use. Pinker has a robust faith in "the new sciences of human nature" (his phrase)—he was formerly the director of M.I.T.'s Center for Cognitive Neuroscience—but his views in "The Blank Slate" are based almost entirely on two branches of the new sciences: evolutionary psychology and behavioral genetics.

These are both efforts to explain mind and behavior biologically, as products of natural selection and genetic endowment. Unless you are a creationist, there is nothing exceptionable about the approach. If opposable thumbs are the result of natural selection, there is no reason not to assume that the design of the brain is as well. And if we inherit our eye color and degree of hairiness from our ancestors we probably inherit our talents and temperaments from them, too. The question isn't whether there is a biological basis for human nature. We're organisms through and through; biology goes, as they say, all the way down. The question is how much biology explains about life out here on the twenty-first-century street.

Pinker's idea is that it explains much more than some people—he calls these people "intellectuals"—think it does, and that the failure, or refusal, to acknowledge this has led to many regrettable things, including the French Revolution, modern architecture, and the crimes of Josef Stalin. Intellectuals deny biology, according to Pinker, because it interferes with their pet theories of mind and behavior. These are the Blank Slate (the belief that the mind is wholly shaped by the environment), the Noble Savage (the notion that people are born good but are corrupted by society), and the Ghost in the Machine (the idea that there is a nonbiological agent in our heads with the power to change our nature at will). The "intellectuals" in Pinker's book are social scientists, progressive educators, radical feminists, academic Marxists, liberal columnists, avant-garde arts types, government planners, and postmodernist relativists. The good guys are the cognitive scientists and ordinary folks, whose common sense, except when it has been damaged by listening to intellectuals, generally correlates with what cognitive science has discovered. I wish I could say that Pinker's view of the world of ideas is more nuanced than this.

Many pages of "The Blank Slate" are devoted to bashing away at the Lockean-Rousseauian-Cartesian scarecrow that Pinker has created. What the new sciences show, he says, is that, contrary to "the romanticism of intellectuals," nurture is usually no match for nature. Rehabilitation often fails to cure violent criminals; identical twins raised separately exhibit uncanny similarities; reading bedtime stories has little effect on I.Q. Findings like these suggest that there are limits to what we can expect from efforts to make people happier, smarter, and better citizens by manipulating their environment. When revolutionaries remake society from the ground up, on the theory that a new kind of human being will emerge, or when feminists argue that if little boys played with dolls and teacups the world would be a less violent place, they are, in Pinker's view, breaking eggs with no hope of an omelette. They are simply frustrating drives and instincts that will find an outlet sooner or later. It's not nice to fool human nature.

But where does this leave us? There are limits, after all, to the idea of limits. We manipulate the environment constantly in order to shape attitudes and behavior. We employ police to intimidate people into obeying traffic signs and antilittering ordinances; we require kids to go to school; we air-condition workplaces and provide them with coffee stations. Peer pressure constrains the expression of

Steven Pinker examines the biological foundations of human conduct—from child rearing to art.

ISTVAN BANYAI

sexual desire. Happy hours relieve feelings of stress. Religious services inspire people to do good works. Most of life is conducted in an environment of man-made stimulants and inhibitors, incentives and deterrents. Many impulses are channelled or suppressed, and many talents and feelings are acquired, and have no specific genetic basis or evolutionary logic at all. Music appreciation, for instance, seems to be wired in at about the level of "Hot Cross Buns." But people learn to enjoy Wagner. They even learn to sing Wagner. One suspects that enjoying Wagner, singing Wagner, anything to do with Wagner, is in gross excess of the requirements of natural selection. To say that music is the product of a gene for "art-making," naturally selected to impress potential mates—which is one of the things Pinker believes—is to say absolutely nothing about what makes any particular piece of music significant to human beings. No doubt Wagner wished to impress potential mates; who does not? It is a long way from there to "Parsifal."

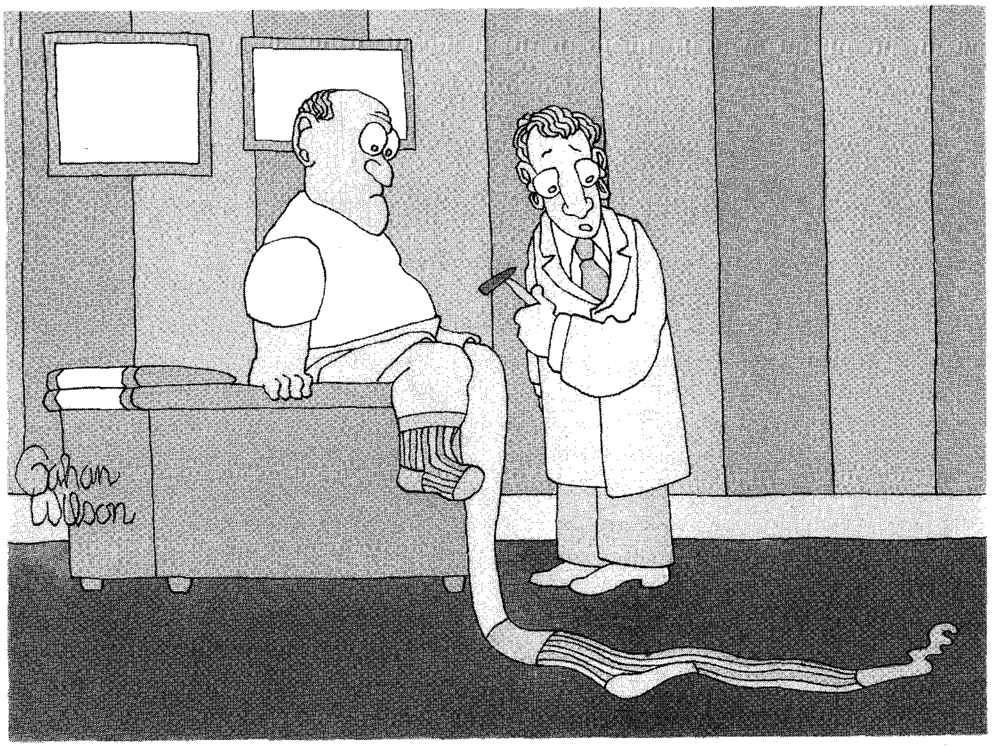
Pinker doesn't care much for art, though. When he does care for something—cognitive science, for example—he is all in favor of training people to do it, even though, as he admits, many of the methods and assumptions of modern science are counter-intuitive. The fact that innate mathematical ability is still in the Stone Age distresses him; he has fewer problems with Stone Age sex drives. He objects to using education "to instill desirable attitudes toward the environment, gender, sexuality, and ethnic diversity"; but he insists that "the obvious cure for the tragic shortcomings of human intuition in a high-tech world is education." He thinks that we should be teaching economics, evolutionary biology, and probability and statistics, even if we have to stop teaching literature and the classics. It's O.K. to rewire people's "natural" sense of a just price or the movement of a subatomic particle, in other words, but it's a waste of time to tinker with their untutored notions of gender difference.

Having it both ways is an irritating feature of "The Blank Slate." Pinker can write, in refutation of the scarecrow theory of violent behavior, "The sad fact is that despite the repeated assurances that 'we know the conditions that breed violence,' we barely have a clue," and then, a few pages later, "It is not surprising, then, that when African American teenagers are taken out of underclass neighborhoods they are no more violent or delinquent than white teenagers." Well, that should give us *one* clue. He sums the matter up: "With violence, as with so many other concerns, human nature is the problem, but human nature is also the solution." This is just another way of saying that it is in human nature to socialize and to be socialized, which is, pragmatically, exactly the view of the "intellectuals."

The insistence on deprecating the efficacy of socialization leads Pinker into absurdities that he handles with a blitheness that would be charming if his self-assurance were not so overdeveloped. He argues, for example, that democracy, the rule of law, and women's reproductive freedom are all products of evolution. The Founding Fathers understood that the ideas of power sharing and individual rights are grounded in human nature. And he quotes, with approval, the claim of two evolutionary psychologists that the "evolutionary calculus" explains why women evolved "to exert control over their own sexuality, over the terms of their relationships, and over the choice of which men are to be the fathers of their children." Now, democracy, individual rights, and women's sexual autonomy are concepts almost nowhere to be found, even in the West, before the eighteenth century. Either human beings spent ten thousand years denying their own nature by slavishly obeying the whims of the rich and powerful, cheerfully burning heretics at the stake, and arranging their daughters' marriages (which would imply a pretty effective system of socialization), or modern liberal society is largely a social construction. Which hypothesis seems more plausible?

In 1859, Charles Darwin announced his conclusion that all life forms are the result of processes that are natural, chance-generated, and blind. There is, he thought, no "meaning" to evolutionary development. Evolution is just a by-product of the fact that organisms have to compete with one another in order to survive. If there were no struggle, if some organisms didn't have to die so that others could live, there would be no development. That is all evolution amounts to. This recognition seems to have made Darwin literally sick. But, ever since "On the Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man" (1871), people have used Darwin's theory to explain why one or another way of managing human affairs is "natural." The notion is that a particular arrangement must have been "selected for"—as though the struggles among individuals and groups and ideas were nature's way of making sure that we end up with the best. Evolutionary psychology is therefore a philosophy for winners: it can be used to justify every outcome. This is why Pinker has persuaded himself that liberal democracy and current opinion about women's sexual autonomy have biological foundations. It's a "scientific" validation of the way we live now. But every aspect of life has a biological foundation in exactly the same sense, which is that unless it was biologically possible it wouldn't exist. After that, it's up for grabs.

The other trouble with evolutionary psychology is that it is not really psychology. In general, the views that Pinker derives from "the new sciences of human nature" are mainstream Clinton-era views: incarceration is regrettable but necessary; sexism is unacceptable, but men and women will always have different attitudes toward sex; dialogue is preferable to threats of force in defusing ethnic and nationalist conflicts; most group stereotypes are roughly correct, but we should never judge an individual by group stereotypes; rectitude is all very well, but "noble guys tend to finish last"; and so on. People who share these beliefs probably didn't need science to arrive at them, but the science is undoubtedly reassuring. On one subject, though, Pinker does take an unconventional position. This is the matter of child rearing.



"Your leg's not supposed to do that when I tap it with this little hammer."

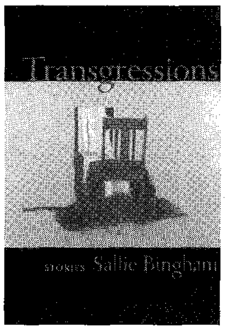
Here Pinker relies on a 1998 book called "The Nurture Assumption," by Judith Rich Harris, which has been the object of some controversy in the field of developmental psychology. Harris claimed that "shared family environments"—that is, parents—have little or no effect on a child's personality. (Strictly speaking, she claimed that parenting does not account for the *variation* in differences in personality, which is what genetic science measures.) Biological siblings reared together are no more alike, or less different, than biological siblings reared in separate families. Half of personality, Harris argued, is the product of genes, and half is the product of what she called the "unique environment"—that is, the particular experiences of the individual child. Harris suggested that children's peers might be the principal source of this environmental input. This is distinctly not Clinton-era thinking. It was Hillary Clinton, after all, who sent parents of older children into a depression by announcing that personality is shaped in the first three years of life. If you missed those bedtime stories, there was apparently no way to make it up. Harris's theory makes nonsense of this anxiety, as it does of virtually all expert child-rearing advice, which Pinker calls "flapdoodle."

What is personality, though? The answer turns out to be quite specific. The new sciences of human nature have discovered that personality has exactly five dimensions: people are, in varying degrees, either open to experience or incurious, conscientious or undirected, extroverted or introverted, agreeable or antagonistic, and neurotic or stable. (This is known in the literature as the Five-Factor Model, or FFM. The five dimensions are referred to by the acronym OCEAN.) All five attributes are partly heritable, and they are what behavioral geneticists look to for a definition of personality. It seems that there is no need for finer tuning, because OCEAN accounts for everything. "Most of the 18,000 adjectives for personality traits in an unabridged dictionary can be tied to one of these five dimensions," as Pinker explains.

When Pinker and Harris say that parents do not affect their children's personalities, therefore, they mean that parents cannot make a fretful child into a serene adult. It's irrelevant to them that parents can make their children into opera buffs, water-skiers, food connoisseurs, bilingual speakers, painters, trumpet players, and churchgoers—that parents have the power to introduce their children to the whole supra-biological realm—for the fundamental reason that science cannot comprehend what it cannot measure.

Science can measure anxiety. This is not just because people will report themselves, in surveys, to be more or less anxious; it is also because a genetic basis for anxiety has been identified. People with a shorter version of a stretch of the DNA that inhibits the serotonin-transporter gene on chromosome 17 are more likely to be anxious. That chronic anxiety is biological—that it is not caused solely by circumstance—is shown by the fact that medication containing a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (that is, an antidepressant) can relieve it. (Would medication count as nurture or as nature?) But that's just the biology. The *psychology* is everything that the organism does to cope with its biology. Innately anxious people develop all kinds of strategies for overcoming, disguising, avoiding, repressing, and, sometimes, exploiting their tendency to nervousness. These strategies are acquired—people aren't born with them—and they are constructed from elements that the environment provides. The mind can work only with what it knows, and one of the things it knows is parents, who often become major players in the psychic drama of anxiety maintenance. The mere fact of having "the gene for anxiety" determines nothing, which is why some anxious people become opera buffs, some become water-skiers, and some just sit and stare out the window, brooding on the fact that their parents did not read them enough bedtime stories. These people are unlikely to be relieved by learning that cognitive science has determined that bedtime stories are overrated.

An obsession with the mean point of the bell curve has sometimes led scientists to forget that the "average person" is a mathematical construct, corresponding to no actual human being. It represents, in many cases, a kind of lowest common denominator. Yet scientists like Pinker treat it as a universal species norm. The classic case of this kind of apotheo-



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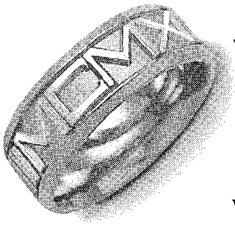

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sis of the average is the kind of study, reported in the *Science Times,* in which the ideal female face is constructed by blending all the features identified by people as most beautiful. The result is a homogenized, anodyne image with no aesthetic or erotic charge at all, far less alluring than many of the "outlying" variants used to derive it. Pinker's evolutionary theory of beauty has the same effect. "An eye for beauty," he says, "locks onto faces that show signs of health and fertility—just as one would predict if it had evolved to help the beholder find the fittest mate." Elsewhere, he explains that "the study of evolutionary aesthetics is also documenting the features that make a face or body beautiful. The prized lineaments are those that signal health, vigor, and fertility." But if this were all the eye required the girl in the Pepsodent commercial would be the most desirable woman on earth. And the only person who thinks that is the guy in the Pepsodent commercial. People don't go for faces that deviate from the "ideal" because they can't have the ideal. They go for them because the deviation is what makes them attractive.

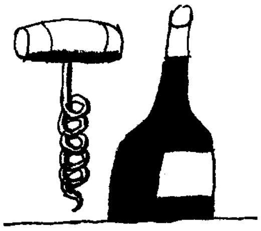
So it is with most of the things we care about—food, friends, recreation, art. Biology reverts to the mean; civilization does not. The mind is a fabulator. It is designed (by natural selection, if you like) to dream up ideas and experiences *away from* the mean. Its overriding instinct is to be counter-instinctual; otherwise, we could put consciousness to sleep at an early age. The mind has no steady state; it is (as Wallace Stevens said) never satisfied. And it induces the organism to go to fantastic lengths to develop capacities that have no biological necessity. The more defiant something is of the instinctive, the typical, and the sufficient, the more highly it is prized. This is why we have the "Guinness Book of World Records," the Gautama Buddha, and the Museum of Modern Art. They represent the repudiation of the norm.

The point is self-evident, and you might think Pinker would just fold it into his theory. But he doesn't. Deviations make him suspicious, and modern art, in his book, is the prime suspect. Pinker believes not only that evolutionary psychology can explain why human beings create and consume art (it's mostly for reasons having to do with the drive for prestige). He believes that evolutionary psychology can explain what is wrong with art today—the decline of the high-art traditions, the loss of the critic's social status, and the "pretentious and unintelligible scholarship" of contemporary humanities departments. "I will seek," he says, "a diagnosis for these three ailing endeavors."

The key, it is no surprise, is the denial of human nature. "The giveaway may be found," Pinker advises, "in a famous statement from Virginia Woolf: 'In or about December 1910, human nature changed.' " She was referring, he says, to "the new philosophy of modernism that would dominate the elite arts and criticism for much of the twentieth century, and whose denial of human nature was carried over with a vengeance to postmodernism," which is "more Marxist and far more paranoid," and which gave us "Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (a crucifix in a jar of the artist's urine), Chris Ofili's painting of the Virgin Mary smeared in elephant dung," and similar outré fare. But "Woolf was wrong," he tells us. "Human nature did not change in 1910, or in any year thereafter."

It seems that aesthetics, unlike cognitive science, is not a body of knowledge worth acquiring. Pinker thinks that any moral sophistication derived from exposure to élite art can be instilled much more effectively by "middlebrow realistic fiction or traditional education." So if people want to hang a painting of a red barn or a weeping clown above their couch, he says, "it's none of our damn business." The preference for red-barn and weeping-clown paintings has been naturally selected. In fact, the "universality of basic visual tastes" has been proved, Pinker points out, by the artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid, who, in 1993, surveyed people's artistic preferences for color, subject matter, style, and so on. They proceeded to make a painting that incorporated all of the top-rated elements: it was a nineteenth-century realist landscape featuring children, deer, and the figure of George Washington. Pinker notes that the painting exemplifies "the kind of landscape that had been characterized as optimal for our species by researchers in evolutionary aesthetics."

Jesus wept. To begin with, Virginia Woolf did not write, "In or about December 1910, human nature changed." What she wrote was "On or about December 1910 human character changed." The sentence appears in an essay called "Character in Fiction," which attacks the realist novelists of the time for treating character as entirely a product of outer circumstance—of environment and social class. These novelists look at people's clothes, their jobs, their houses, Woolf says, "but never . . . at life, never at human nature." Modernist fiction, on the other hand, because it presents character from the inside, shows how persistent personality is, and how impervious to circumstance. Woolf, in short, was a Pinkerite.



Pinker needed only to have looked through any trot on modernist writing to see his error. One of Woolf's principal specimens of the new, post-realist fiction was Joyce's "Ulysses," a novel about twentieth-century Dublin whose characters are all based on characters in the Odyssey. You can't get a much finer tribute to universal human nature than that. The modernists were obsessed with the perdurability of human nature. This is, as Woolf said, precisely what distinguishes them from the realists and romantics who preceded them. It's why Kandinsky "invented" abstraction (to help preserve, he said, "the element of pure and eternal art, found among all human beings, among all peoples and at all times"). It's why Picasso put African masks on the prostitutes in "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." "Heart of Darkness," "Women in Love," "A Passage to India," "Sweeney Erect," "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop"—they are as explicitly about the intractability of human aggression and desire as an evolutionary psychologist could wish. There is nothing Marxist about them. The preferred mode of orthodox Marxism was not modernism; it was realism.

"Postmodernism" might, indeed, be explained as a reaction against the modernist faith in "pure art" and human nature. But what does that have to do with beauty? Beauty is an effect produced by an object. Pinker has no more looked at the "postmodernist" work he reviles than he has read the Woolf essay he misquotes. Like Tom Wolfe, whose attacks on modern painting in "The Painted Word" he quotes, Pinker thinks that modern art is all ideas because it is only as ideas that he can experience it. In fact, Ofili's painting is not "smeared in elephant dung," and Serrano's "Piss Christ" is not "a crucifix in a jar of the artist's urine." It's a *photograph* of a crucifix in a jar of urine, and, technically and formally, a rather beautiful and evocative piece. It would satisfy a number of Komar and Melamid's populist criteria. Many people find it offensive, of course, but that reaction, too, is instinctive, and the discordance of the two sensations is part of the experience the object provokes. "Piss Christ" is not the most profound work of art ever created, but it is not just a crude prank.

As for Komar and Melamid's paint-by-polling: it is the art-world equivalent of the *Science Times'* ideal face. Komar and Melamid are satirists. They set out to find the visual lowest common denominator, and the work they produced (called "United States: Most Wanted Painting") is preposterous even as kitsch. It tells us as much about art as a single dish combining all the flavors people said they liked would tell us about cuisine. Darwin's fundamental insight as a biologist was that, among members of a species, what is important is not the similarities but the differences. If human beings were identical, a single change in the environment could wipe out the race. Similarity, ultimately, is death. So why do Darwin's followers in evolutionary psychology want to make what people have most in common into a social good?

What the new sciences of human nature seem to show, for all their investigations down there among the genes and the neural networks, is that "human nature" is as much an abstraction as "God" or "the universal law." It is a magic wand that people wave over the practices they approve of. If that makes them feel better, who can complain? Human nature is never the *reason* for their approval, though. It would be nice if we could justify our choices by pointing silently to our genes. But we can't. Our genes, unfortunately, are even stupider than we are. ♦

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BOOKS

DIRECTOR'S CUT

Samuel Fuller and the French connection.

BY RICHARD BRODY

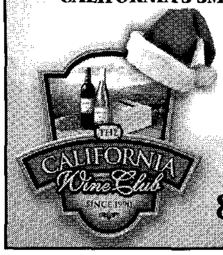
"They love me in France" is the last, best hope of a Hollywood filmmaker in search of a second act. This refrain is the farcical residue of an aesthetic revolution that shook France half a century ago. In the nineteen-fifties, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and their fiercely intellectual circle of young Parisian film critics hailed certain Hollywood directors who were generally considered craftsmen (like Howard Hawks) or showmen (like Alfred Hitchcock) as artists of the first order and—despite the compromises inherent in studio filmmaking—as the sole "authors" of their films. The controversy provoked by this paradoxical *politique des auteurs* helped these critics to break into the field as directors themselves. They quickly won fame under the rubric of the French New Wave, and the American filmmakers they championed became culture heroes in France.

Besides Jerry Lewis (who really is as good as they said he is), the prime beneficiary of this adulation was probably Samuel Fuller. American critics tended to see Fuller, who was making movies during this period with titles like "Hell and High Water," as just another director of low-budget action films; but the young French enthusiasts recognized him as one of the most original filmmakers working at the time. Godard, writing in a 1957 article for *Cahiers du Cinéma* about Fuller's Western "Forty Guns," compared his extravagant inventiveness to that of Erich von Stroheim; in 1959, Luc Moullet, also a *Cahiers* critic and future director, extolled him as the Marlowe to Orson Welles's Shakespeare.

Although Fuller's acclaim abroad never really boosted his status here (except among cinephiles, who followed the French lead), it exerted an odd and uniquely powerful influence on his career and on his life. At the very least, it is safe to say that "A Third Face: My Tale of Writing, Fighting, and Filmmaking" (Knopf; $35), Fuller's posthumously published autobiography—the director died five years ago—would not have come about without the French enthusiasm for his work.

Fuller was born in 1912, to working-class Eastern European-Jewish immigrant parents, in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1923, his father died and his mother brought her seven children to New York. At the age of twelve, Samuel started working as a copy boy on William Randolph Hearst's New York *Journal*, and hustled to become personal copy boy to the editor-in-chief. Energetic, ambitious, and precociously curious about the city's underside, he left the respected *Journal* and became, at the age of seventeen, a full-fledged crime reporter on the New York *Evening Graphic*—a photo-heavy paper of such spectacular sensationalism that it was nicknamed "the Pornographic." To appear older, Fuller started smoking cigars, which became his enduring trademark. Fuller's crime reporting provided what he later called his "hellbox" of insider information on the stool pigeons, gangsters, pickpockets, prostitutes, corrupt cops, and perverts whose exploits would be his cinematic stock in trade. It also provided him a rude schooling in the photographic craft, as Fuller noticed that "from the same cadaver, each photographer obtained a different, singular result, according to the angle, the light."

In 1931, at the age of eighteen, Fuller decided that he wanted to write the Great American Novel. In quest of a different sort of gritty realism, he bummed his way across the country by truck and freight train with his typewriter tied to his back, earning a living as a cartoonist and free-lance journalist. The effects of the Depression were everywhere; Fuller reported on strikes, race riots, and the daily struggles of the homeless, whose Hoover-



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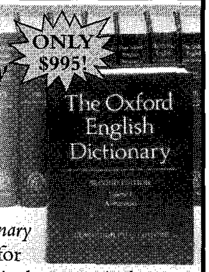

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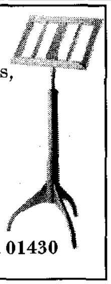

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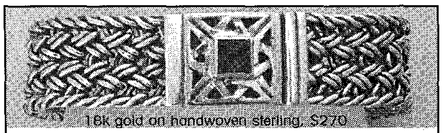

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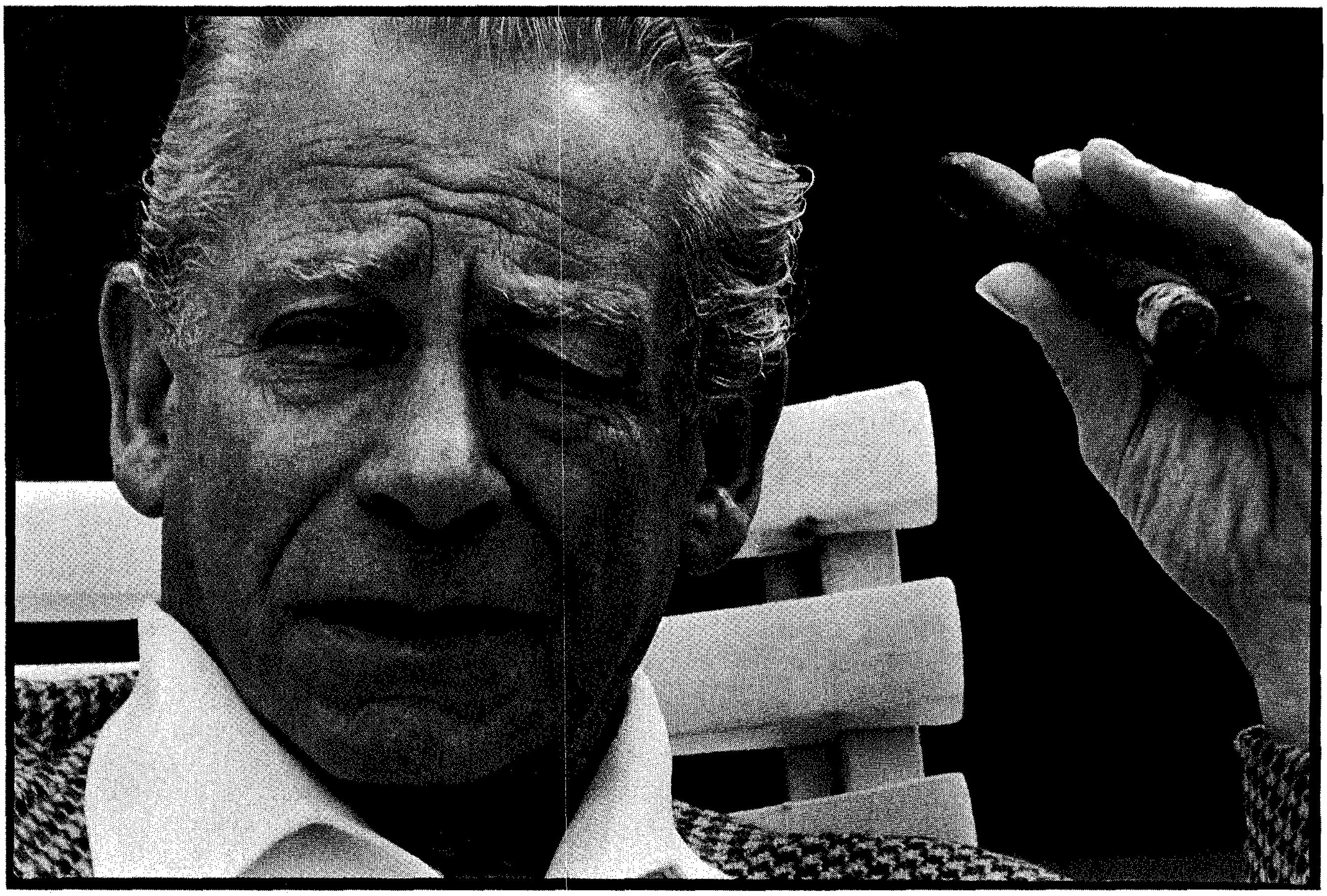
ville shantytowns he made his hostels. Then his brother became gravely ill, and he returned to New York, where he began to churn out pulp-fiction novels with such premonitory titles as "Test Tube Baby" and "Burn, Baby, Burn." This facility earned him an invitation to Hollywood; he arrived in 1936 and quickly found lucrative work, first as a ghostwriter and script doctor, then as a screenwriter.

Fuller was twenty-nine when the Second World War began, but he turned down a commission writing military P.R. and instead volunteered for the infantry, hoping that he'd get some great material if he survived. As a corporal in the First Infantry, he fought in North Africa, in Italy, in the D Day invasion of France, and in the final eastward thrust through Germany. He asked his mother to send him an amateur movie camera, with which he documented the outfit's shocking discovery of a concentration camp in a town in the Sudetenland. The war may have given Fuller more experience than he bargained for—a new hellbox of severed heads, burning flesh, limbs floating in a blood-red sea. He later described his wartime life in words that could equally be used to describe his films, a reality in which "death rained down without notice or design" from projectiles launched "out of nowhere." He returned home traumatized, and recuperated at his mother's apartment in New York before returning to Hollywood to look for work.

Through his prewar connections, Fuller, a rapid and prolific writer, sold some screenplays, but he hated what became of them afterward. He decided that he had to become a director, in order to protect his scripts from "any other banana head," but he didn't have sufficient influence to get work directing major studio productions. Thus he did B pictures, which were made very cheaply and under difficult conditions, and which quickly proved both artistically and financially successful. His first film, "I Shot Jesse James," from 1949, got him noticed; his third, "The Steel Helmet" (1951)—a raw film about a hothead survivalist officer in the Korean War—made him and his producer rich. Fuller swiftly rose to the top of Hollywood's bargain basement, winning a six-picture deal with Darryl F. Zanuck, of Fox, who granted him control over the script, direction, and editing of his low-budget movies.

Fuller thought of himself as a storyteller: he never made a film that he didn't write, and his work as a director was fanatically centered on what he insisted on calling, with mannered casualness, his "yarns." But Fuller's morbid melodramas would have been genre clichés in the hands of a less gifted artist; the titles alone—"Fixed Bayonets," "The Crimson Kimono," "Verboten!," "Shock Corridor," "The Naked Kiss"—suggest the lurid tone that characterized his work. Fuller concealed the thinness of his material with flamboyant details and acrid, flashy dialogue, but then redeemed it through his masterly cinematic technique. His closeups were intensely close and ominous; he probed every corner of his modest sets with extraordinarily long and elaborate tracking shots. To heighten the tension both offscreen and on, he wired his actors with body mikes, forcing them to deliver lines in the midst of long and complex action shots. Inspired by


The most original and personal element of Fuller's films was their relentless violence. Photograph by Elliott Erwitt.

MAGNUM

the highly textured realism of films by such Italian postwar directors as Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica, he often filmed on location, and shot chase scenes with hidden cameras on crowded city streets.

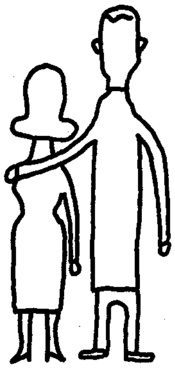
But the most original and personal element of Fuller's films was their relentless violence. His characters stalk through his pictures with a hair-trigger fury, which periodically bursts forth in images of great visceral impact. Fuller revered the tabloid style of photographic shock—a New York politician being shot in the mouth as he opens it to speak, the explosion of the Hindenburg—and his technical daring and mastery were most effective when simulating such moments. His prime visual trope is the unforeseen eruption of violence that intrudes from offscreen, suggesting a boundless universe of ambient menace. Characters are felled by bullets from unseen guns, by shells from unseen mortars, by fists from unseen attackers.

Fuller knew, however, that nothing he represented on the screen could approach the reality of crime and war. He said that the only way to make a realistic war film would be to shoot live ammunition at the spectators' heads, although, he added, "the casualties in the theater would be bad for business." He was aware that his images were only highly stylized approximations of violence, but, as such, he found them sublime. For "Pickup on South Street" (1953), Fuller had a staircase built in a subway set solely to show a character being dragged down it by the feet with his chin smacking each step, because, as he later described the effect, "Dat-dat-dat-dat-dat; it's musical."

The *Cahiers* critics were not mistaken in assuming Fuller's films to be an extension of the man behind the camera: in private, Fuller lived on the edge of outburst. He was an impulsive brawler, once almost leaping off a fifty-foot film crane to attack an actor. (He was also a jealous husband: when Charlie Chaplin offered Fuller's first wife, Martha Downes, a screen test, Fuller threatened, in Chaplin's presence, "to have her face changed" if she went.) When Hawks invited Fuller to go hunting, Fuller, who found the sport repugnant, offered to make Hawks himself the prey, promising to do no worse than nick the elder man's earlobe. On the set, instead of saying "Action," Fuller cued his actors by firing a gun.

But Fuller's rage had an ethical component as well: not only were his films enlivened by bizarre incidents lifted from his wartime diaries and his crime reporter's hellbox; they were also grounded in the political and social realities behind his garish stories. In "The Steel Helmet," Fuller makes extended reference to the Second World War internment of Japanese-Americans and the persecution of African-Americans. And in "China Gate" (1957), a harrowing but ludicrously anti-Communist screed in defense of the recent French war in Indochina, the plot turns on an American volunteer's hatred for his Chinese-looking son by a half-Chinese woman (Angie Dickinson!). Fuller cast Nat King Cole in "China Gate," in his first major dramatic role, and many of Fuller's films had a subplot relating to racial and ethnic minorities, including interracial love stories: at the time, pairing whites with Asians, as Fuller did in "House of Bamboo" and "The Crimson Kimono," was considered daring.

Off the set, Fuller was a Democrat, and a proud, anti-authoritarian liberal, who despised McCarthyism and Communism with equal pugnacity. Indeed, Fuller claimed that he depicted violence only in order to inspire revulsion, that he staged war in order to reveal its "insanity." The films themselves, however, were politically scattershot, coming under attack from the left (for their patriotism and anti-Communism) and from the right (for general insolence—the Army complained that his war films were useless for recruitment). His intention may have been moral, but his characters' amorality was exciting to watch, and his desire to arouse loathing of war and violence is less evident than his palpable enthusiasm for filming them.



Fuller's sudden onscreen ambushes are the antithesis of Hitchcock's redemptive morality of suspense: in Hitchcock's films, the viewer is aware of, and has time and perspective to judge, what the character ignores. Fuller's violence is traumatic and unredeemed: character and viewer are equally surprised by what hits them; afterward, they are too stunned to do more than recompose themselves and move on. "The Naked Kiss" begins with a woman beating furiously with her pocketbook at the camera, in the viewer's face. "Forty Guns" ends with John Ericson using Barbara Stanwyck as a human shield in a gunfight with Barry Sullivan, who calmly shoots her to get at him. Glory is beside the point: Fuller's people fight merely to survive, to reach the final credits standing. Fuller repudiated the heroic mythologizing of his friend John Ford's war films and Westerns but could not imagine that his own amoral antiheroes would become an equally lasting cinematic archetype.

It was his good fortune that his interests coincided, at least for a while, with what could aptly be called the target audience. In the nineteen-fifties and early sixties, when adulthood was still a badge of honor, art that gratified the adolescent taste for insolence and violence offered the thrill of a benign transgression. But although Fuller's commercial success won him offers to direct important studio films, he refused to make any movie on which he did not have full creative autonomy. He turned down major projects with Marlon Brando, Clark Gable, and Humphrey Bogart, as well as the D Day epic "The Longest Day," because of artistic differences with the producers. In 1959, he even rejected an offer to direct his dream project about his infantry unit, "The Big Red One," because the studio had recruited John Wayne for the lead role, and Fuller found Wayne too "heroic" for the part. (The fact that Martha Downes, who had accompanied Fuller on the movie's location-scouting trip, fell in love with his technical adviser probably didn't help.)

His two most extravagantly jangled masterpieces—"Shock Corridor," from 1963, in which a reporter in pursuit of a story contrives to get himself locked in an insane asylum, and "The Naked Kiss," from 1964, in which a reformed prostitute engaged to a millionaire discovers him to be a child molester—were the work of a near-outsider. Established producers had little taste for the raw subject matter. Fuller believed that the social upheavals of the nineteen-sixties would open up new opportunities for him. He expected that the country's new spirit of "youthful idealism and vigor" would welcome his anti-authoritarian truculence, and that the withering of censorship would open the door to his most explicit revelations of life's underside.

He was wrong on both counts. By the mid-sixties, with the new youth orientation of American mass culture, the adolescent was no longer a rebel without a cause: he had found one, and it was peace and love. On the other hand, as official codes of censorship fell and internalized ones of decency slackened, Fuller's choreographed and abstracted violence lost currency beside the hyper-realistic blood being spilled in the films of Peckinpah, Penn, and Scorsese. As if overnight, Fuller had been transformed from a grizzled veteran into a living relic. After "The Naked Kiss," he never again filmed for the American roughrider producers who had stood behind him.

In 1965, Fuller followed to Paris two young aspiring producers with family money who wanted him to direct a contemporary version of Aristophanes' "Lysistrata." The project came to nothing; but while in Paris Fuller was asked by Jean-Luc Godard, who was shooting "Pierrot le Fou," with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina, to appear in the film and to answer, on-camera and in his own name, some questions about his art. In a cocktail-party scene, Belmondo asks Fuller to define the cinema. Fuller responds, "A film is like a battleground: it has love, hate, action, violence, death—in one word, emotions." Fuller spoke these words with his natural sidelong rasp, his cigar jabbing the air, its smoke rising like the holy spirit of art ascending from the gutter. Fuller's vatic words brought tears to Godard's eyes.

Before the release of "Pierrot le Fou," later that year, hardly anyone outside Fuller's circle of acquaintances would have known his face or his voice; after "Pierrot," it was as if his face, his voice, and his immortal aphorism were all that remained of him. Fuller had always been, by all accounts, a character; Godard turned him into a Character. As it happened, it was an honor that Fuller could have done without. Once he became an onscreen presence, his importance to the cinema was both magnified and transformed: instead of being recognized for his achievements as one of the greatest Hollywood directors in the hardboiled tradition, he became known as the embodiment of that tradition, even as it was rapidly becoming history.

Though demand for Fuller's work as a director was drying up, his new career as an actor, and as a persona, was launched. He had a small role in Luc Moullet's 1966 "Brigitte and Brigitte," another one in 1970, in Dennis Hopper's "The Last Movie." Francis Coppola considered him for the part of the Jewish gangster in "Godfather II" (but then chose the lower-key Lee Strasberg). He appeared in Wim Wenders's "The American Friend," in Spielberg's "1941," and in a dozen other movies.

One motive was the paycheck. In 1967, Fuller had married Christa Lang, a German actress thirty-two years his junior, whom he had met in Paris. By 1975, when their daughter, Samantha, was born, they were living in a small house in the Hollywood Hills that Fuller called the Shack, and he was barely making ends meet: "Believe me, it was quite a struggle to keep up the mortgage and pay for my cigars."

Meanwhile, his few commissioned scripts were rewritten; his own projects ended disastrously. A film he made in Mexico with Burt Reynolds was taken out of his hands and recut; Warner Bros. pulled the plug on a cherished Western after seeing the first rushes. Finally, at the urging of Peter Bogdanovich, Lorimar produced "The Big Red One," a four-and-a-half-hour summation of Fuller's experiences in the Second World War, but then cut it down to a mangled hundred and thirteen minutes. In 1981, Paramount signed Fuller to take Roman Polanski's place directing "White Dog," about a dog trained by a pathological racist to attack dark-skinned people; the studio, fearing controversy, kept the film out of theatres and sold it directly to NBC, which then shelved it

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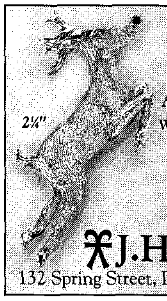

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as "inappropriate." (" 'Inappropriate,' " Fuller commented, "is going to your mother's funeral in a jockstrap.")

Largely because of these misfortunes, Fuller moved to Paris in 1982, and became instantly famous. The French still knew and loved his classic films, and had the additional satisfaction of lionizing an American hero neglected in his own country. French producers gave him the chance to make a few more movies in Europe, but they lack the urgency of his best Hollywood work from 1949 through 1964. Despite intermittent felicities, these later films sustained no mood and exposed no reality; they were insufficiently connected with the world around him to be convincing, insufficiently stylized to characterize a world apart. Their unquestioning acceptance of a hardboiled ethos was a vestige of a departed way of life, as much in need of footnotes as Quixotic chivalry or Victorian chastity.

Fuller's career of personal appearances, nonetheless, continued unabated. He went to Normandy for French television to commemorate D Day. He shared his twenty minutes of concentration-camp footage and his histrionic commentary on it with a documentary filmmaker. He modelled clothing on a Paris runway for a Japanese fashion designer. He appeared in a work of performance art in a Roman amphitheatre. He headed the jury of the Paris Photography Month, he attended gala openings, he took part in the Festival of Jewish Film in Paris in 1986, the year after it had been bombed.

The French press paid copious attention to these activities; and Fuller, who often crossed the line from garrulous to logorrheic, was happy to oblige, granting countless interviews for French newspapers and television. The French film critic Jean Narboni, who, with the writer-critic Noël Simsolo, conducted a marathon series of interviews with Fuller in 1985, sensed that Fuller "would as gladly speak to a dog, a bird, a comet," even "to a wall," as to him. In the classic era, Fuller's "voice" was to be found in the direction of his films; in Paris, Fuller's speaking voice had become the repository of his art. Fuller had become the Buffalo Bill of the American hardboiled tradition, a one-man roadshow of a legendary bygone era. He was now a victim of an unforeseen correlate of the *politique des auteurs* to which he owed his renown: the auteur began to take precedence over the films themselves.

Meanwhile, Fuller's collaborations and friendships with younger filmmakers multiplied. He appeared in three more films by Wenders, in two films by the American independent director Alexandre Rockwell. He went to Brazil with Jim Jarmusch and the Finnish director Mika Kaurismäki in order to talk his way, on-camera, through an unrealized film project from 1954 about the Karajá Indians; he talked his way through his own life, on-camera, with Tim Robbins. He hung out with Quentin Tarantino. He was befriended by Jonathan Demme and Martin Scorsese.

For the younger directors who adored him, Fuller was not merely a mascot; he was both a mentor and a prime cinematic reference. While shooting "1941," Spielberg kept a print of Fuller's "Hell and High Water" in the trunk of his car. Scorsese used a clip from "Pickup on South Street" in "The King of Comedy." Tarantino gave Fuller prominent onscreen thanks in "Jackie Brown" (and is rumored to want to do a Second World War film based on "The Big Red One" and "The Steel Helmet"). Fuller was the gruff yet wise and loving grandfather for a generation of younger filmmakers who were threatened with obsolescence in advance by Godard's ongoing reinvention of self and cinema. Fuller served them as a kind of living bridge back over Godard's mournful explosion of the myths and forms of the American cinema, to the safe high ground of a neoclassicism of well-worn genre and pulp fiction. Their emulation of Fuller expressed the heartfelt wish that they could go on telling their own yarns—but with the artistic recognition that has come to the film director thanks to the *politique des auteurs*.

Despite the benevolent efforts of Fuller's influential Hollywood friends, Fuller lived out his later years in anger and frustration over his inability to realize his stories onscreen. The book "A Third Face" is what he realized instead. By the time he returned to California in 1995, his speech impaired by a stroke, Fuller was already at work on his autobiography, having been urged to the task by his wife, who is also a co-author. Christa Lang Fuller writes in her introduction, "I convinced him that his greatest yarn might be his own life." The equation was all too accurate: in this book, Fuller's life is reduced to a succession of yarns.

Much of "A Third Face" is strongly reminiscent of the vigorous and comprehensive interviews with Narboni and Simsolo that *Cahiers du Cinéma* published as a book entitled "Il Était une Fois . . . Samuel Fuller." But where the tightly sprung French text follows the improvisational logic and exuberance of an irrepressible talker, "A Third Face" is rearranged, chopped up, smoothed out, preserving some of the streetwise tang of Fuller's speech but artificially formalizing the material as a written work, with interspersed plot summaries and swaths of dialogue from the films. There are quoted letters, dates, reviews, everything to tame the wild overgrowth of thoughts into a well-groomed hybrid; the result is neither spontaneously oral nor carefully written.

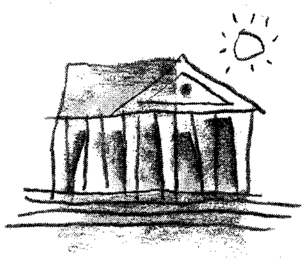
Not only the tone of "A Third Face" has been hedged by authorial inhibition but also its content. For instance, Fuller does not mention sex or romance with any woman except his two wives, the first of whom he married in his mid-thirties; and several tales of his impulsive ferocity which he has told more revealingly elsewhere are diluted here. One wonders what else is missing, and awaits a biographer who will tap less guarded sources. Just as Fuller's public persona depended upon, but factored out, the brutal genius of his images, his book filters out the vital authenticity of his character. Though "A Third Face" conveys the pungent charm of the tales from which it is spun, it does so without the two central elements of Fuller's enduring importance: his art, and his artlessness.

Fuller died in his home in the Hollywood Hills in 1997. He was eighty-five years old. In Paris, his death was front-page news, but not here. In 1959, in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Luc Moullet had enthused—in praise that would prove a strange and long-tailed curse—that for Fuller's artistry it sufficed "for him just to be himself at every moment." Fuller remained himself to the end, and he paid the price. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Words to Outlive Us, *by Michal Grynberg, translated from the Polish by Philip Boehm (Metropolitan; $35).* These twenty-nine first-hand testimonies make up a kind of collective memoir of life in the Warsaw ghetto, from its establishment, in November, 1940, through (and even beyond) its destruction, in 1943. These previously unpublished accounts provide an especially vivid picture of everyday life there, and in particular of the constant struggle to maintain a semblance of civic normality in the face of horrendous daily violence and impending annihilation. At the same time, the narrators do not avoid the bleaker aspects of the ghetto's history, offering a damning picture of, for example, the Jewish police force, which collaborated with the Nazis and became "an institutional accessory to murder." One comes away from the book stunned by the remarkable energy and willingness to resist that so many demonstrated but haunted by the recognition of how little that resistance availed. Of the ghetto's nearly five hundred thousand inhabitants, only forty thousand are believed to have escaped.

Puccini, *by Mary Jane Phillips-Matz (Northeastern; $30).* Compared with Phillips-Matz's sprawling biography of Verdi, this book on Puccini—a composer who finally seems to be getting some critical attention—is a simple affair. But then Puccini, at heart, was a simple man, an earthy, generous sort who remained devoted to his extended family even as his extramarital affairs ruined his marriage. Although this is not the rich and intricate study that the composer deserves, Phillips-Matz nonetheless draws a convincing portrait. Her exploration of Puccini's diabetic condition provides a possible explanation of his laziness, yet none of the great composers were as ardently devoted to diversion as Puccini, who would rather hunt, attend an auto show, or supervise yet another production than turn his attention to a new work. (When he did, he drove his librettists up the wall with endless demands for revisions.) All of this, combined with his innate melancholy, gives the impression of a deeply doubting man who, despite his enormous success, almost had to force himself to compose.



Born Twice, *by Giuseppe Pontiggia, translated from the Italian by Oonagh Stransky (Knopf; $23).* This taciturn, extremely intelligent novel won Italy's Strega Prize. When Professor Frigerio's son Paolo is born, he sustains cerebral lesions as the result of an inept delivery; his mind isn't impaired, it turns out, but he lurches when he walks and has difficulty speaking. There's very little railing at Fate here (and there's a profoundly un-American lack of interest in litigation); rather, Frigerio's wry, fugue-like series of meditations on what Paolo's disabilities mean, over time, to him, to Paolo's intent, impassioned mother, Franca, and to Paolo himself turns into a subtle, unsentimental primer not only on the nature of disability but on the pitfalls we encounter when we try to turn a child into someone else.

Cheap Hotels, *by Daisann McLane (Taschen; $19.99).* As the *Times*' "Frugal Traveler" columnist, McLane has travelled the globe in search of lodgings that strike the ideal balance of comfort and cost. A few years ago, she began photographing places she stayed in, and the resulting pictures, documenting rooms and their views from Chicago to Kuala Lumpur, are both colorful and plaintive, their glimpses of urban excitement and exotic tranquillity tinged with the inevitable sadness of transience. A section entitled "Ten Places I Was Happy," in which each photograph is accompanied by a one-sentence reason, offers the satisfaction of a good haiku, and scattered throughout the book are fascinating artifacts of local custom. "All around the world," McLane writes, "each culture holds fast to its own version of hotel room comfort, and to the little detail that it would be unthinkable to overlook, even in the humblest lodging."

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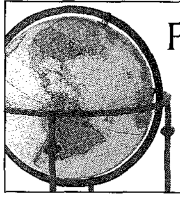

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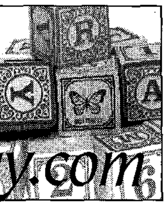

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

OBSESSIONS

"Talk to Her" and "Femme Fatale."

BY DAVID DENBY

In a shiny Madrid clinic, Benigno (Javier Cámara), a male nurse who is one of the two heroes of Pedro Almodóvar's "Talk to Her," washes the body of a patient named Alicia (Leonor Watling). Slowly, patiently, he wraps her in layers of bedclothes, lacing her up like a deluxe package. A beautiful young ballet dancer who was struck by a car, Alicia has been in a coma for four years, and Benigno talks to her as he works, figuring she needs the company. Before he became a nurse, he took care of his mother the same way. "You have to pay attention to women," he says. A shy, slightly chubby young man, intelligent but unimaginative, he is trusted around the clinic, and trusted by Alicia's psychiatrist father, too, because he's a virgin—and, perhaps, a repressed homosexual—who would not take advantage of her. His gentleness, and the ritual washing of Alicia's limbs, suggests a devotion of religious intensity. The movie's second hero, Marco (Darío Grandinetti), who is an Argentine writer, meets a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter named Lydia (Rosario Flores), and becomes her lover. Lydia is gored in the ring, and she, too, falls into a coma, but Marco doesn't talk to her as Benigno talks to Alicia. Marco's interest in Lydia is sexual and personal, and when she can't respond to him he goes silent. A man of sensibility, Marco weeps when he is reminded of time spent with an earlier love. In Almodóvar's previous film, "All About My Mother," the men either died or had breast implants; they became "women," and worked as hustlers. There seemed to be no way—not even a bad way—of being a man in Almodóvar's world. Now the director has found one: men can adore women. The two dissimilar men form a bond centered on their task.

Almodóvar's stories have always been improbable, even nutty, at the literal level but coherent and satisfying emotionally and poetically. Earlier in his career, in movies like "Law of Desire" and "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown," he worked in super-bright colors—the shades of magazine graphics and department-store displays. A veteran of Madrid's gay cabaret scene and the city's funky comic-book culture, he relied on a fast, pop tempo and abrupt transitions, and he was drawn to extravagance of every kind. In "Women," Carmen Maura set her bed on fire after her lover left her, and then, staring at the blaze in wonder, threw a lit cigarette into the flames. The redundant torch was the Almodóvar signature of excess. A bad-boy camp fabulist, he created moments that went over the top into blasphemy and scandal, but the flamboyant imagery and the hyperbolic performances were so funny that he didn't hurt anyone's feelings seriously. Almodóvar was something new in movies—a soulful erotic entertainer of surpassing generosity. His characters were drug-addicted nuns, transsexuals, homosexuals, vain hetero studs, jumpy, hot-tempered women. There were no normative emotions except longing and romantic obsession, and the pain of loyalty.

A love story of sorts, from Almodóvar.

JOSE LUIS MERINO

The friendship of two men meeting over the bodies of half-dead women is strange, to put it mildly, but this time Almodóvar draws us into his tale slowly, tenderly—he establishes the psychological props underneath the creepy situation, moving back in time. We see that Benigno, living in his mother's apartment, became obsessed with Alicia before her accident, when she was a ballet student rehearsing in an academy across the street. And, years earlier, Marco was devoted to a heroin-addicted woman whom he protected but finally couldn't save. There's still a fabulist at large in "Talk to Her," but the attempt at psychological realism is new, and Almodóvar has brought an extraordinary calm to the surface of his work. The imagery is smooth and beautiful, the colors are soft-hued and blended. Past and present flow together; everything seems touched with a subdued and melancholy magic.

At the beginning of the movie, Benigno and Marco, who haven't yet met, sit side by side at a performance of Pina Bausch's ballet "Café Müller." Onstage, two women bounce off the walls in blind anguish while a man rushes to and fro in front of them, moving chairs out of the way. Bausch's ballet is an independent work, but it seems to come straight from Almodóvar's unconscious, putting us in touch with extremes of isolation and dependency. In the clinic, Benigno gazes at the naked Alicia, who has a lusciously ripe figure. He seems eager only to serve her, to worship an ideal woman, but, after a while, we can't be sure—there may be a hint of sexual interest in his caressing attention. And Marco, like the man in the ballet, is drawn to a furiously self-dramatizing woman, the kind of woman Almodóvar has always loved. Rosario Flores has a Picasso face, with a long chin, a large, hatchet nose, and thick, unruly black hair. Dressed in her torera rig, she's an amazing creature, the most potent of Almodóvar's women. There's a touch of fantasy in both relationships. Almodóvar's point, I think, is that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness.

The story takes a startling turn, but Almodóvar prepares us for it by creating an old silent film that Benigno says he has seen. In this movie within the movie, a fervent lover drinks his partner's diet medicine and shrinks to the size of a homunculus. At night, when his beloved is sleeping, the eager little man staggers across her breasts and then enters the giant portals of her vagina, which are planted with ample sculpted shrubs all around, and disappears, never to emerge again. There are echoes of paranoid-Surrealist episodes from Buñuel and Fellini in this, and most of us will be tempted to see the film as Benigno's dream. One way of looking at "Talk to Her," I suppose, is as a story shaped by a homosexual's longing for women, a longing that can be expressed only as irony or as nightmare. In the clinic, the women don't move or speak; they are immobilized and entirely manageable. Wheeled out to lie in the sun, on adjacent chaises, Alicia and Lydia face each other wearing dark glasses and robes, like two fashionable rich ladies; they could be mannequins, women reconfigured as art—an image that is both funny and sinister. Some viewers may feel that the movie teeters on the edge of a disastrous malevolence, but I don't think it should be taken that way. It should be taken, rather, as a gay director's admission of emotional avidity and physical fear. At the end of the movie, Pina Bausch's company is onstage again, this time doing a bucolic dance in which men and women hold each other tightly. Using the two ballets as a frame, the film shifts from isolation and madness to romantic wholeness. Certainly, Almodóvar believes in the reality of romantic love—he believes in it as much as any movie director, straight or gay, ever has.

Brian De Palma's "Femme Fatale" is elegant nonsense. For some years, it's been clear that De Palma's work has lost the jolting intellectual energy and wit of his "Carrie" and "Dressed to Kill" days, and in "Femme Fatale" the Master is just diddling. The movie, an erotic thriller set in Paris, hangs together only because De Palma's repeated use of certain locations and visual motifs provides a nominal consistency. But it doesn't hang together in any way that matters. This is not to say that many of us will not be ravished by an early sequence, set at the opening of the Cannes Film Festival, in which a naughty girl posing as a photographer (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos) seduces a model dressed only in diamonds arranged on her body in snake patterns. You heard me. The two of them make out behind the shaded glass panels of a chic toilet stall, steaming up the joint. At its best, and also at its worst, the movie employs the sleek visual design of high-schlock Euro fashion ads. Antonio Banderas, very much at home in schlock, high or low, puts in a casual appearance as a happy-go-lucky photographer thrown into the middle of an intrigue he never understands. Banderas himself seems lost, except for a brief episode in which he pretends, with lovely tact, to be a gay fussbudget looking for a missing floppy disk—an homage, perhaps, to the free-spirited movies he once made back in Madrid, with Pedro Almodóvar. ♦

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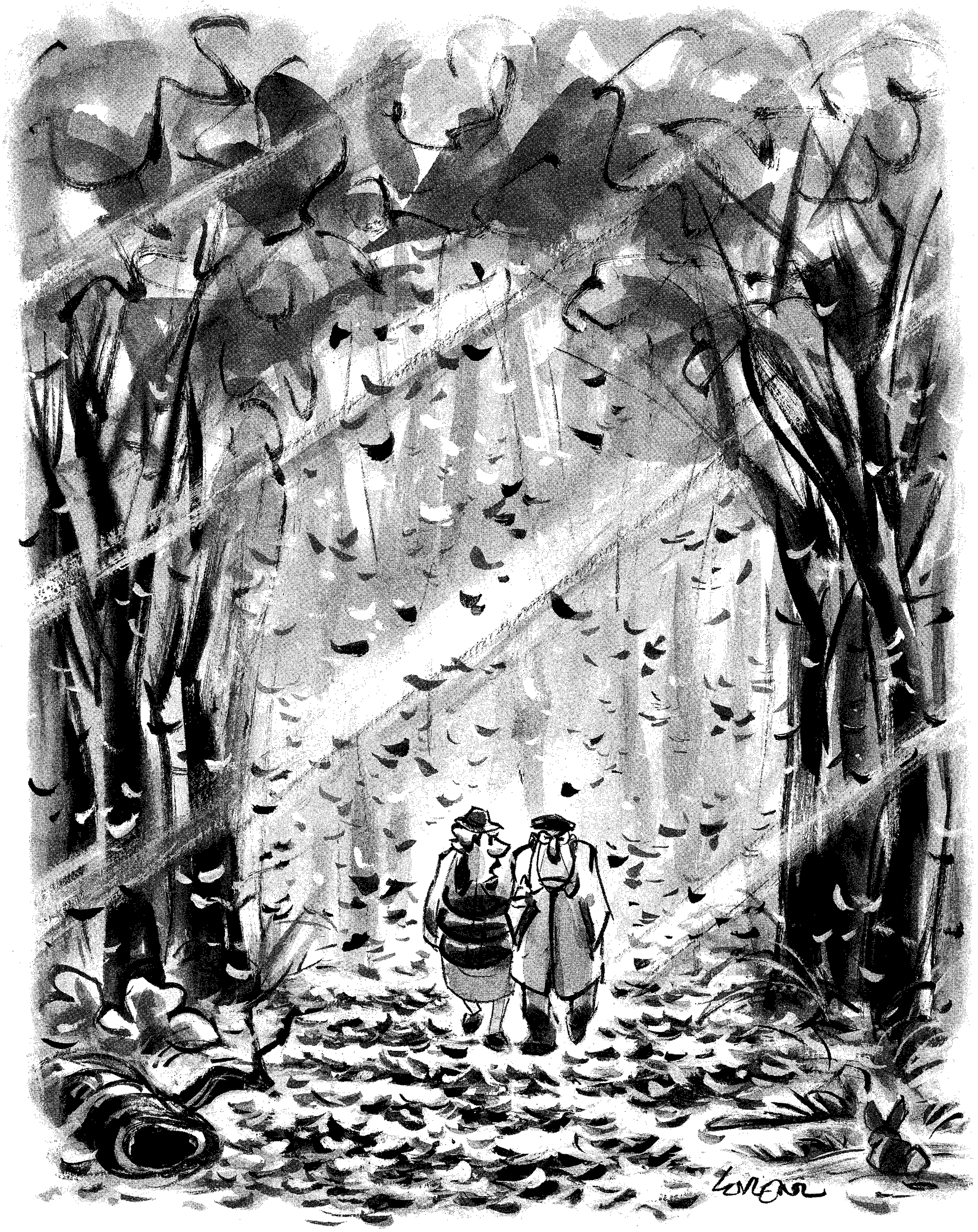

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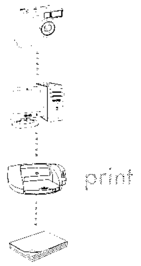

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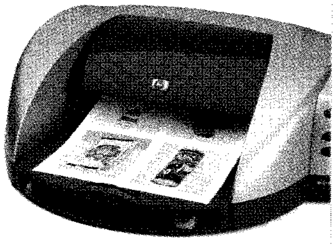

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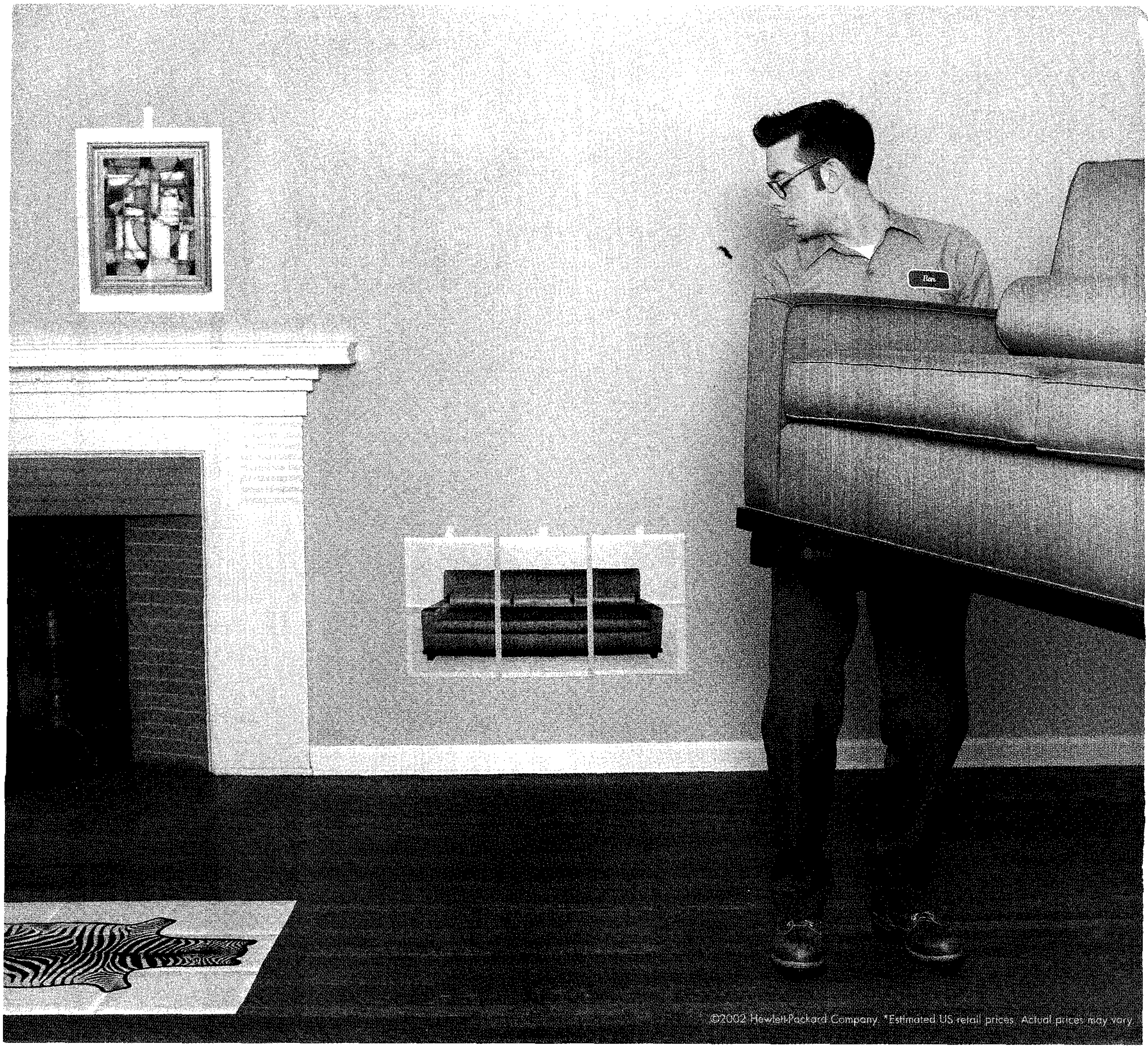

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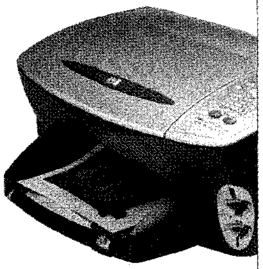

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